THE

LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 16 November, 1934 Number 11

THE UNITED FRONT and—

THE LABOUR PARTY.

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

SPAIN • IRELAND

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BY L. RUDAS

(THIRD EDITION)

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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

VOLUME 16 NOVEMBER, 1934 NUMBER 11

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The Labour Monthly

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Our Financial Appeal

WITH the contributions acknowledged below, the LABOUR MONTHLY Debt Fund now stands at £56 13s. 3d. The LABOUR MONTHLY Guarantee Fund stands at £11 2s. 4d. a month.

We wish to express our warmest appreciation to all those who have given. But we wish at the same time to redouble and intensify our appeal to all our readers to help, and to help quickly.

The conditions which have given rise to this appeal have been explained in our issue for September, together with a full statement of the financial position and income and expenditure of the LABOUR MONTHLY.

We have to wipe out a debt of £480. We have to raise a regular £29 a month, in the form of guarantees from readers, to cover current costs.

The need is urgent. If every reader could raise 2s. the debt would be wiped out. We believe there are many hundreds of readers who would be glad to give, but who have not yet taken active steps ; we appeal to them to hasten. We appeal to our overseas readers to come to the help of the LABOUR MONTHLY. We appeal to all active friends to take collections on behalf of the LABOUR MONTHLY, among their friends, in trade union branches, in all working-class organisations, explaining what the LABOUR MONTHLY fights for and why it deserves support.

We should like to quote from one or two of the many letters that have reached us in connection with this appeal.

Mr. Havelock Ellis, in sending the donation acknowledged below, writes :

> I am not entirely in agreement with the policy of the LABOUR MONTHLY ; but I am in general sympathy with the parties of the left, and I regard the LABOUR MONTHLY as an important organ of expression.

The LABOUR MONTHLY is deeply appreciative of this attitude of sympathy from an honoured scientist, which is

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able to overlook minor political differences and help in the common cause, and hopes that this example may stimulate many others to do likewise.

Another very generous donator writes :

> I'm sending this with congratulations for the way the paper is being carried on and the circulation pushed up. I am impressed by the work that's been put into it lately, and, as a result of my experiences at Collett's, by the quality of its readers and their enthusiasm for it. Only yesterday some one was in who told me that if he had the money what he would like most to do would be to subsidise the L.M.—unfortunately, he hadn't the money, though !

A Cheshire comrade writes :

> PARKGATE, CHESHIRE.
>
> DEAR COMRADE EDITOR,
>
> Herewith as a regular and appreciative reader of your journal 2s. towards crisis expenses. I shall follow up with more. I am making myself a collector among my comrades and friends.
>
> I hope all our readers butt in earnestly and effectively. Best wishes to you and your robust staff.
>
> Yours fraternally,
>
> WILLIAM J. PAUL.

This is the spirit which will carry us through, if every reader will do his part and her part.

Let us make a big effort to see that by the end of this month the total exceeds last month's as much as that month exceeded September.

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

United Front—After Southport—Problems of Left Opposition —Spain—Spain and British Labour—Labour Chairman on Fascism—"Terrible Warning"—From 1931 to Southport—Rising United Front Movement—Socialist League's Rôle—Socialist League in Opposition —Cripps' "Bargain"—Southport as Right Wing Offensive—War on United Front— Conclusions for Left Opposition—Facing the Issues—No Capitulation— Mass United Front

IN view of the Southport Labour Party Conference decisions, the question needs to be plainly faced by all socialists and left workers in the Labour Party: Where do they stand? Overshadowing every issue at the present time is the need of the united working-class front, the need to mass the common front of the working class against fascism and war, to face with absolute clearness the real character of the struggle before us. The Spanish mass-struggle reinforcing the lessons of Germany and Austria; the meeting, for the first time for twelve years, of representatives of the Second International and Communist International; the increasing menace of the world situation, which is visible to all in the fascist offensive, the armaments race and the drive to war; the Southport decisions, still seeking to set up an iron wall against any form of united front; the signs of the opposition votes at Southport, heavily defeated, but on the issue of the general strike against war reaching a large measure of support: all these reveal a situation in which it is more than ever necessary for every socialist, for every worker, for every working-class organisation to strengthen the fight for the united working-class front, to take stock afresh of the whole situation in the light of present developments and present needs, to open up the widest common discussion of the line of advance, to break down every obstacle to common working, to redouble every effort in order that we shall yet build up effective working-class unity in action for the coming battles, decisive

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for the whole future of Socialism in Europe and the world. *It is a hundred times evident that we are on the eve of big and critical issues for the whole future of the working-class movement, and that a heavy responsibility rests on all.*

THE decisions of the Southport Labour Party Conference raise urgent issues for the whole working-class movement, and in particular for all socialists and left workers in the Labour Party. On the one hand, Southport has meant the adoption of an extreme reactionary programme, a programme of the "public corporation" or Corporate State in place of socialism, and of open support of imperialist war, and has definitely rejected the Socialist League proposals of a supposed rapid parliamentary transformation to Socialism to be accomplished by the next Labour Government. These latter hopes, so far as they may have been held, have been pricked. Not only that, but the Executive has reinforced last year's rejection of the united front by new and intensified discipline against any form of association whatever between revolutionary and reformist workers—at the very same time as the united front is advancing all over Europe.

THAT is one side of Southport. But there is another side. Southport has shown that the extreme reactionary line of the Executive is meeting with definite opposition, which reflected, even though not yet strongly, the rising opposition and movement to the united front throughout the country, as seen at Olympia and Hyde Park and Bellevue, in the united front decisions of the Manchester and Bradford Trades Councils, or in the strength of the opposition at the London Labour Conference on Fascism. The Socialist League has for the first time come out into the open in opposition to the Executive on every major political issue. Roughly one third of the local labour parties voted consistently against the Executive. Above all, on the issue of the general strike against war, which arouses intense feeling in the working class, two of the largest unions, the Miners with a membership of 400,000 represented, and the Distributive Workers with 100,000, voted against the Executive,

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and a total opposition vote of 673,000 or one third of the membership was reached. Taking into consideration the heavy limitations and restrictions on any expression of militant working-class opinion at the Labour Party Conference, it is manifest that there is evidence here of considerable opposition forces, which can be enormously strengthened if the issues are correctly placed before them and work is intensified in all the working-class organisations, and offering the possibility still to defeat the reactionary policy of the Executive and win the battle for the united working-class front throughout the country. *What is important now is the clearing of the issues within the left opposition in the Labour Party. The understanding that the necessary path forward of the left opposition lies, not in utopian day-dreams of future parliamentary socialist transformations to be accomplished through a hypothetical Left Labour Government, but in the present struggle, in the building of the united working-class front despite all the bans of the reactionary Executive, and that here or nowhere, in this present fight, will be settled the future of the working-class movement—this is the essential that must be reached.*

BEFORE the Southport Conference had concluded its sessions, the guns of the reaction in Spain were booming the answer to the dreams of the peaceful parliamentary-democratic path to Socialism, and demonstrating anew the necessity of the united working-class front of struggle in every country. The Spanish workers were fighting arms in hand the assault of the class enemy. The struggle for Socialism was revealed as no parliamentary comedy, but as the armed struggle of the classes for power. *After Italy, Germany. After Germany, Austria. After Austria, Spain. When will the lesson be learnt in Britain?* Will it be learnt in time through conscious preparation of the workers, or will it only be learnt at heavy cost after disaster and defeat? That is the really urgent issue, underlying all discussions of left and right. The Spanish mass struggle has raised immeasurably the whole international working-class movement, even more than the battles of Vienna in February, because at a higher degree of preparation, mass

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unity, speed of response, and consciousness of aim, even though not yet reaching the conditions of leadership and organisation for victory ; the strength of the fight achieved already at the present stage of the world crisis, shaking the power of the ruling class, makes certain the future victory throughout Europe, as the world crisis develops.

BUT what has been the response of the British Labour Movement to the Spanish struggle ? The Labour Party Conference at Southport " welcomed " the fight of the Spanish workers and peasants. In an emergency resolution it " welcomed the evidence that the workers' organisations are prepared to resist the threatened attempt to establish a Fascist régime." But this resolution omitted certain details of importance. It omitted that the Spanish workers' organisations, Socialist and Communist, had formed a united front—at the same time as the Labour Party was not only refusing the united front, but condemning and forbidding any form of co-operation whatever of revolutionary and reformist workers. It omitted that the Spanish workers were conducting armed struggle—at the same time as Labour speakers on every platform were denouncing every form of armed struggle (save on behalf of imperialism) as an invention of Communism to be rejected and opposed by every Labour supporter. It omitted that the Spanish workers were appealing to the soldiers to come to them —at the same time as Labour representatives in Parliament were proclaiming their agreement with the first clause of the Sedition Bill and denouncing all attempts to turn soldiers from their allegiance as " loathsome." It omitted that the Spanish workers, including also the principal Socialist leaders who took part in the struggle, were proclaiming the aim of the dictatorship of the proletariat—at the same time as the Labour Party was denouncing this aim with all its power as to be opposed no less than Fascism. Under these conditions the " welcome " could hardly carry conviction. The contradiction of this " welcome " only laid bare the basic contradiction of the whole position of the Labour Party, seeking still to appeal to the workers and in fact representing a policy opposed to every interest of the working-class struggle.

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THIS glaring contradiction between the realities of the class struggle in Europe and all the professed principles of the Labour Party struck even the Chairman of the Labour Party Conference, W. R. Smith, of the Boot and Shoe Operatives, in his opening address. Speaking of the victories of the Fascist dictatorships in Germany and Austria, he declared :

> Their opponents could not defeat them at the ballot box, so they were made the victims of machine-gun bullet, hand-grenade and artillery shell-fire.
>
> The happenings in Germany and Austria are a terrible object lesson and warning to the workers of all lands.

What is the " terrible object lesson and warning to the workers of all lands " (*i.e.*, including Britain), which the Chairman of the Labour Party Conference here points out ? It consists, according to the Chairman of the Labour Party Conference, in this : that when " their opponents could not defeat them at the ballot box," that is, when the workers advance in parliamentary strength, then they are " made the victims of machine-gun bullets, hand-grenade and artillery shell-fire." But in that case what happens to all the Labour Party teaching of the peaceful path to Socialism through Parliament and denunciation of the Communist warning to the workers to prepare " not for easy parliamentary victories, but for heavy civil war." *Under the hard compulsion of facts, after the event, with the " object lesson " before the eyes of all, the Labour Party Chairman is compelled in* 1934 *to admit the correctness of the Communist warning which the Labour Party so long derided and denounced : but in the face of this admission the exactly opposite policy is still pursued.*

HAS this " terrible object lesson and warning " of the emptiness and impotence of paper " ballot-box " defences, and of the inevitability of heavy class struggle, including armed struggle, been taken to heart and studied and learned by the British Labour Movement ? Not yet. From Right to Left of the Labour Party leadership, from Henderson and Clynes to the Socialist League, just this issue, the cardinal issue confronting the British workers, is studiously ignored. On the very eve of the Southport Conference appeared the semi-official book of the Socialist League, G. R. Mitchison's " First

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Workers' Government." It appeared with commendations of Lansbury, Webb, Cripps, etc., that is, of prominent Labour Party leaders. The book consists of an imaginary picture of a transformation to Socialism through a Labour Government elected in 1936. The transformation is described with the most painstaking attention to administrative detail, even to the inclusion of the draft texts of parliamentary bills. But the class-war is left out of the picture. Instead, the Preface contains one revealing sentence, the sole reference to Fascism:

> As for Sir Oswald Mosley and his followers, I have not even mentioned them.

This sentence deserves to stand as a monument of the outlook of the Labour Party leadership in 1934, which paralyses the workers for the struggle before them and thereby prepares the way for Fascism.

IT is necessary to face the plain facts of Southport and what Southport means. For this purpose it is essential to understand the process that has taken place in the Labour Party during the past three years since the last Labour Government. The crisis of 1931, the ignominious collapse of the Second Labour Government, the passing over of the principal and best known leaders to open unity with the class enemy, shook the Labour Party from top to bottom. This was not only shown in the loss of two million votes at the 1931 election, the first big setback of the Labour Party since its inception. It was also shown in the inner process that developed in the Labour Party, the anger, disillusionment and wave of left sentiments of the rank and file, and the diminishing authority and prestige of the remaining leadership. The past Labour Government was universally repudiated and denounced as a warning of how not to do it. All the Communist criticisms of that Labour Government were admitted—after the event. "Gradualism" was denounced from official platforms. "Reformism" was denounced. The "frontal attack on capitalism" and "Socialism Next Time" became the watchwords. Indeed, the brighter spirits began to pour contempt on the Communists as "reformist" because they fought for the immediate demands of the workers. The

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left wing of the Labour Party, represented by the Independent Labour Party, broke away from the Labour Party in 1932. At the Leicester Labour Party Conference in 1932 Henderson with difficulty secured a hearing ; and a resolution that any future Labour Government, whether " with or without power," must " immediately " introduce " definite socialist legislation," was carried without a division, against the opposition of the Executive, represented by Henderson, pleading to the Conference not to " tie their hands " and proclaiming the resolution " a profound mistake." At the 1933 Hastings Labour Party Conference the well-known resolution to " take no part in war " was unanimously carried, in glaring opposition to the official Labour policy and even to the rest of the decisions of the Hastings Conference. The Executive professed its acceptance of the resolution and bided its time. For the moment the Executive had to bow to the storm, in order to strike its blow later. That time came with Southport.

THE advance of Fascism in Europe intensified this process. The united working-class front was rising in the country, despite all the Executive bans. This was shown in the Hunger March in the beginning of 1934, supported by the local working-class movements all over the country ; in the National Unity Congress, attended by 1,420 delegates from working-class organisations ; in the development of the Anti-War and Anti-Fascist Movement ; in the success of the anti-fascist counter-demonstrations at Olympia and Hyde Park ; and in the extended activity of common bodies like the German Relief Committee, in which prominent Labour Party members took part side by side with Communists. In the face of this rising militant working-class front it became more and more necessary for capitalism and its organ, the Labour Party Executive, to strike a blow to check it. The secret conversations of the National Government and the Labour Party leaders preceding Southport, nominally concerning the issue of Fascism, turned above all in practice on the question of the rising communist influence in the working class and how to check it.

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The Labour Party Executive laid its plans for Southport. At Southport the Right Wing struck its blow.

IT was in this period 1932-4 that the Socialist League was created and grew up. The Independent Labour Party, the former organ of left reformism in the Labour Party, under pressure of the leftward demands of its membership on the one side, and of the increasing Executive discipline, on the other, compelling its members to vote, not merely against their consciences and against I.L.P. policy, but against Labour Party Conference decisions and against the most elementary needs of the workers or be expelled, finally gave up the impossible attempt to " ride both horses " (in Maxton's phrase) and passed out of the Labour Party. The Socialist League was then created to fill the vacant place. The Socialist League was intended to provide a model of an auxiliary propagandist socialist organisation within the Labour Party, which should not repeat the errors of the I.L.P. It was emphasised at the outset that the Socialist League would make no attempt to repeat the fatal path of the I.L.P. and put forward an alternative policy to the Executive. Its leaders in the main took no part in the united front or in the active working-class struggle, but confined themselves to abstract propaganda for a legislative socialist programme to be accomplished by the next Labour Government. Further, the League consisted mainly of a group of leading elements and writers in the Labour Party with little working-class membership ; the membership claimed was three thousand. Every precaution had thus been taken to create a " safe " socialist organisation within the Labour Party which would not repeat the ill-fated path of the I.L.P., but would counter the militant left tendencies within the working class by a " constructive socialist programme " on a basis of loyalty to the Labour Party. The subsequent history of this attempt is an instructive study of the rôle and dilemmas of left reformism in the present period. Within two years of its formation the Socialist League found itself putting forward a complete alternative programme to the official Labour programme, being overwhelmingly voted down at the Labour Party Conference, and already beginning to be

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faced with the same problems as confronted the I.L.P. in the preceding period.

SO long as the Socialist League confined itself to general propaganda of vast socialistic promises on behalf of a future Labour Government, the Labour Party Executive tolerated it as a useful propaganda department. The division of labour between left and right was so far similar to that of the Labour Party and I.L.P. in the years 1924-7 : while Henderson and Clynes remained as pledges to the bourgeoisie of the essential " soundness " of the Labour Party, the " wild statements " of Cripps would appeal to the left workers and intellectuals. But this blissful confusion of voices could not continue indefinitely, any more than with the Labour Party and I.L.P. On the other hand, the glaring contradiction between the wholesale socialist promises of the Socialist League and the actual capitalist policy of the Labour Party became more and more impossible to conceal. The membership of the Socialist League, as the successive conferences in 1933 and 1934 showed, increasingly pressed for a more definite stand, for more militant policies, for the united front. On the other hand, as soon as the Socialist League began to trench on the sphere of policy, the Executive uttered a warning note and prepared to take action. The conflict was postponed as long as possible ; at the 1933 Conference a division was avoided, and the Socialist League proposals were withdrawn, on the understanding that the Executive would give them full and careful consideration. But the publication of the new Labour Programme in 1934 brought the issue to a head. The Socialist League could not passively accept this explicit programme of the Corporate State and of imperialist war without committing political suicide. It was forced to come into the open with a complete series of opposition amendments. A division was inevitable for the Southport Conference.

EVERY effort was made to avoid a conflict. Elaborate behind-the-scenes negotiations between the leadership of the Labour Party and of the Socialist League preceded

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the Conference, and the Conference opened with the announcement by Clynes and Cripps respectively of a bargain having been reached. The character of the "bargain" is likely to arouse more laughter than respect. The Labour Party Executive made an extremely vague promise to meet opposition of the House of Lords "if" the House of Lords should "sabotage" Labour measures, and in any case to propose the "abolition" of the House of Lords "as a legislative chamber" (therefore, in fact, not its abolition, but its reorganisation as a "revising" chamber); further, it solemnly promised that "if there were an emergency" it would take emergency measures. Several speakers on behalf of the Executive were at pains to point out that this meant no change whatever in the policy of the Executive. On this basis, however, Cripps declared his complete satisfaction to the Conference: "this solves difficulties to the satisfaction of both sides." Cripps was thereafter elected to the Labour Party Executive. It is obvious to any observer that this "bargain" settles nothing whatever of the actual issues. The Socialist League amendments to the programme remained, even though in watered-down form, and were steadily voted down by the Conference. The election of Cripps to the Executive (with a mandate to take responsibility for and carry out a programme condemned by the Socialist League as "gradualism" and "reformism") only emphasises, rather than diminishes, this definite defeat and rejection of the Socialist League's policy. *The deeper issues of the left opposition in the Labour Party, which were only partially and inadequately reflected in the Socialist League amendments, will not be so easily "solved."*

THE significance of Southport thus stands out sharply in relation to the whole development of the period 1931-4. Southport represents *the extreme offensive of the ruling Right Wing in the Labour Party to re-consolidate capitalist control and policy in the Labour Party* after the temporary confusion of the years succeeding the fiasco of 1931 and the exposure of the Second Labour Government, and *to erect a dam against the rising united front demands and opposition elements.* It was necessary to make the Labour Party "safe"

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(for capitalism) against the rising left currents, against the rising united front movement, against the extravagant socialist hopes which were beginning to be centred on the next Labour Government, and for the new tasks of capitalism, for the advance to more and more fascist forms of organisation, for the coming war. The line of the Labour Party Executive to accomplish these aims covered four main points. First, the new Programme of Capitalism and War (innocently called "For Socialism and Peace"). Second, the specific War Resolution, wiping out the Hastings resolution, and committing the Labour Party to the "duty of supporting our Government unflinchingly" in imperialist war ("the difficulty of British Labour will be to differentiate its policy from that of Mr. Winston Churchill and the French Government"—*New Statesman and Nation*, October 6, 1934). Third, the overwhelming voting down of the Socialist League and exposure of its weakness, as not being able to muster even so many votes as the Communist Party was previously able to obtain in the Labour Party before the Communists were expelled. Fourth, the new and intensified disciplinary regulations against any and every form of Communist and left wing activity, against any and every form of united working-class front or association of revolutionary and reformist workers. The total work of the Labour Party Executive at Southport thus powerfully laid the foundations for the next stage of capitalist fascist advance.

LET there be no misunderstanding of the significance (above all, at the present time when the united front is spreading throughout Europe) of the new threat of "full disciplinary" measures against any form even of "loose association" between Communist and Labour Party workers. These organisational measures contain the real political programme with far more inescapable clearness than even the programmatic statement, whose cloudy phrases ("equality of opportunity," "a planned national economy," "peace, freedom and justice"), many may still be innocent enough to misread as "socialist," if they listen only to the speeches on popular platforms and do not analyse the actual proposals. But in the

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organisational measures the realities of class-war stand out sharp and open, and admit of no ambiguity. Many delegates raised the question why, if such ruthless discipline was being enforced against any Labour Party member who appeared on a common platform with a Communist, the same Labour Party chiefs who were enforcing this were themselves constantly on a common platform with the leaders of the bourgeoisie, in the League of Nations Union, at Industrial Peace dinners, etc. Why such hostility to the working class party, the Communist Party, and no hostility to the capitalist parties? The only answer could be was that the Labour Party Executive preferred the united front with capitalism to the united front of the working class. And this in fact was the answer given. The Labour Party leader, Herbert Morrison, in a statement deserving of record made plain *that, in the view of the Labour Party Executive, the main enemy was the Communist Party, and not the capitalist parties.* He said:

> *The Communist Party was singled out for exceptional treatment because it was an exceptional political party. It was the only political party that set out to make trouble for the Labour Party, the trade unions and the co-operative movement.*

Thus, in the view of the Labour Party Executive, the Conservative and Liberal Parties, the parties of capitalism, do not "make trouble for the Labour Party": they are recognised as allies, or at any rate as friendly and honourable rivals on the same side of the barricades; the only basic enemy is the Communist Party. Could there be a clearer statement of the basic capitalist outlook of the Labour Party Executive? And from this fact follows the necessity of the continually sharper discipline year by year, as the pressure of working-class advance increasingly strains against the barriers imposed by the Labour Party Executive and Trades Union Congress General Council.

WHAT, then, must be the conclusions of the militant workers and socialists from the results of Southport? It is necessary to face the unfavourable facts without illusions. A programme has been adopted which is indubitably a programme of capitalism. In the words of one of the official

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speakers of the Socialist League at the Conference, the programme is

> not a plan for Socialism, but a repetition of the 1929 attempt to work within declining capitalism. Capitalism will not be endangered by these proposals.

And again, on the compensation discussion :

> The issue was between a form of organisation leading to the Corporate State and a form of organisation leading to Socialism.

The Conference chose the " form of organisation leading to the Corporate State." It is no good trying to deny this hereafter, or to continue for purposes of public propaganda to paint marvellous pictures of the great socialist transformation which a Labour Government, if returned with a parliamentary majority, will accomplish. To do this is knowingly to deceive the workers. When the same speaker who had made the above declarations as to the character of the official Labour programme adopted at Southport, proceeded at the end of the Conference to declare, in seconding the vote of thanks to the Chairman, that " the Conference had contributed to the building of the new Socialist Order of Society," he was only playing fast and loose with words and destroying the meaning of his own previous fight.

DOES this mean that there is no room for an opposition in the Labour Party, and that the only course for the left workers is to come out of the Labour Party ? On the contrary. *There is every room and vital need for the most powerful and all-embracing movement of active opposition to the existing capitalist policies and leadership in the Labour Party, as in the trade unions :* this is the indispensable path to the revolutionisation of the British working class and the building of the mass Communist Party which can alone lead the working-class revolution to victory. But there is only one inescapable condition for such an opposition to be able to realise its rôle. It must be *a militant opposition on the basis of the active class struggle, on the basis of the struggle for the united front*, not an illusion-fed " opposition " which spreads misleading hopes of a future peaceful parliamentary transition to socialism through the existing Labour Party, while ignoring the present issues of

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the class struggle which the Labour Party leadership is betraying. This is the decisive test.

TWO paths, in fact, open out before the left opposition in the Labour Party. One path is the path of capitulation, of the "bargain" of Cripps. This path is the path of stultification and defeat. It means to close one's eyes to plain facts, to eat one's words, to advocate the very programme previously denounced, and correctly denounced, as a programme of capitalism, and proclaim it now for purposes of propaganda a programme of socialism, and *on this false basis* to call for support for a future Labour Government. This means to talk "socialism" for the benefit of capitalism, and to become in fact an enemy of the workers' struggle, of the workers' united front.

THE other path, the only other path, is—*to fight*, to fight the capitalist policies of the Executive, to fight for socialism, to carry on the class struggle on every issue, to build the workers' united front in despite of all the official bans, and *win through by the strength of mass support*. This is the path which leads to victory. All the official bans and ukases are impotent when the masses are in motion. Already the Hunger March showed it. September 9 showed it. On the very morrow of Southport, and its solemn excommunication of any common platform with Communists, the Manchester Trades Council has called an All-in Demonstration against Fascism, with a common platform of leading Communist, Labour Party and Trade Union speakers. This is the spirit which will conquer. Once this movement develops all over the country, Transport House will spit its venom in vain. Let all the left opposition, let all who wish to fight for socialism, mobilise the masses in the present struggle and build the united front—this is the way forward. Let them build the Anti-Fascist Front. Let them work to unite the movement in the localities and in the districts on every issue. The Communist Party will fight side by side with every militant socialist and worker in the common fight ; is ready—as the example of France

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has shown—to make the utmost possible sacrifices and concessions for the sake of the common front. The united working-class front will finally conquer, because the imperious needs of the whole situation and of the working-class struggle increasingly demand and compel it. Its victory will lead the way to the defeat of fascism, to the defeat of the war menace, and to the final advance for the overthrow of capitalism. This is the lesson of Southport. We must take up and defeat the challenge of the Labour Party Executive. We must win the battle for the united working-class front ; for on this all else depends.

R. P. D.

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THE THREATENED BAN IN SOUTH AFRICA

In September the LABOUR MONTHLY published details of a threatened ban on working-class literature, including the LABOUR MONTHLY, in South Africa. News has since come through that the Government has now succeeded in legalising this ban. Without any opposition, even from the Labour members, either in the Lower House or in the Senate itself, a Bill to amend the Customs Act was passed so that instead of the clause reading as we gave it in September empowering the Government to seize " objectionable and indecent literature," the clause now reads " objectionable in any way whatsoever."

The LABOUR MONTHLY understands that a deputation representing the Trades and Labour Council (the South African T.U.C.), the Labour Party and the Communist Party, sponsored by the Citizens' Rights Committee, has lodged a protest with the Minister of the Interior.

In answer to the deputation's requirement that the Minister should give an undertaking not to bring working-class literature under this ban, Mr. Hofmeyer, the said Minister, answered that owing to " the peculiar race question " no such undertaking could be given. Readers will realise that this " peculiar race question " signifies nothing but a situation in which all Bantu peoples are exploited down to the most extreme depths of poverty and are denied all equality whatsoever with the white peoples for the greater profit of the white capitalists. The latter's Government, therefore, will make every effort to prevent any exposure of this system from reaching the ears of these Bantu peoples.

Consequently in the interest of the rights and freedom of all peoples, whatever their colour, readers are urged to do all in their power to prevent this threatened ban which, though up to the time of writing has not yet been brought into operation, from being imposed. The deputation has served to expose the Government's purpose, but readers however will realise that this is not enough. Every effort should be made by all readers, especially in South Africa, to send themselves a letter of protest, or get their organisation also to pass a resolution of protest.

The LABOUR MONTHLY also appeals particularly to its English and American readers to do likewise, as experience has shown that protests from organisations outside the country concerned have particular effect.

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THE LABOUR PARTY PREPARES FOR WAR

By R. F. ANDREWS

These kings defile us with their powder,
We want no war within the land ;
Let soldiers strike : for peace call louder,
Lay down arms, and join hand in hand.
But should these vile monsters still determine
" Heroes " to make us in despite,
They'll know full soon the kind of vermin
Our bullets hit in this last fight.

THE Labour Party has forgotten that fifth verse of the *International*, which once tens of thousands of its children sang in the Socialist Sunday Schools. Dead and buried, too (for the Labour Party), is the resolution of the Basle International Socialist Congress against War of 1912, which said the same thing as the international workers' hymn, in more carefully chosen words. Dead and buried is that resolution of the Hague World Peace Congress of December, 1922, for which the Labour Party delegation voted unanimously, and according to which (we read in the Party Executive report to the Annual Conference in 1923) : " The Labour Movement itself must oppose all wars which may threaten to break out in the future with all the means at its disposal, and prevent the actual outbreak of such wars by proclaiming and carrying out a General Strike." Dead and buried is even the lip service paid to working-class internationalism in that resolution of the foundation Congress of the Labour and Socialist International at Hamburg (May, 1923), for which the Labour Party Executive reported that its delegation voted as " one delegation seeking common agreement," and which declared :

> This struggle of the international working class against imperialist policy will be most effective if Labour everywhere fights against the imperialism and capitalism of its own country, with all Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary means at its disposal for the class struggle. . . . The first requirement of this struggle is that the Labour and Socialist Parties of all countries refuse all support to an imperialist war, and that their Parliamentary representatives in accordance with this attitude, withhold their consent to military or war credits having imperialist objects.

And even the resolution of last year's Labour Party Conference at Hastings—which only declared that the deepening of imperialist and capitalist rivalries is " a direct cause " of war, which made no mention of the unpleasant duty described in that forgotten verse of the *International :* but which did declare that " the working class of any country

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has no quarrel with the working class of any other country," and above all did " pledge itself to take no part in war and to resist it with the whole force of the Labour Movement," specifying in particular the general strike—has now been gathered to its fathers. Every word that was ever said by the Labour Party leaders after the last war, in order to attract the support of the millions who had vowed : " Never Again ! " has been thrown on the dustheap. It has served its purpose. It was uttered in the post-war period. To-day we are in the pre-war period, and new words are needed, to prepare the Labour Party for supporting the next war.

That, and nothing less, is the meaning of the decisions of the 34th Annual Conference of the Labour Party at Southport. Their meaning is all the more unmistakable because a preliminary unofficial conference of some 70 delegates heartily endorsed the resolution of the London Labour Leagues of Youth of July 29, 1934, declaring among other things :

> We do not propose to be betrayed as was the youth of this country in 1914. In no circumstances would it be to the interests of the youth of this country for the Labour Movement to support a war in defence of any capitalist state. Defence of " Democracy and the League of Nations " might well be made the excuse for another world war . . . . If there is an immediate danger of war involving this country while the Labour Party is in opposition, a General Strike should be immediately declared, and the opportunity seized to expel the existing Government and institute a Socialist Government.

But very few of the delegates who agreed with this resolution (and, notably, no representative of the Leagues of Youth) had the chance even to voice its sentiments at the Conference, in a discussion which was reduced to half its proposed length by the simple device of shouts of " Vote ! Vote ! " from the big blocks of trade union delegates. Faced with an entirely unorganised opposition with a wide variety of viewpoints (from Quakerism to revolutionary Socialism), and armed with the bureaucratic discipline of the trade union officials who decide its policy, the Executive was able to " steamroller " its way through—thereby giving a striking illustration of its tactics in the event of actual war. The 269,000 votes cast against the official policy, and the 673,000 votes for the policy of the General Strike against War, show that already there is a bigger basis for the revolutionary minority to work upon, than was the case before August, 1914. But these votes do not alter the fact that the Conference by a large majority placed the Labour Party machine at the disposal of the British Government when next it engages in a world war.

It goes without saying that such was not the outspoken purpose of the documents adopted—*War and Peace* and *For Socialism and Peace*. But it is sufficient to test their pretensions and promises, by contrast with facts and events—and by the " forgotten documents " referred to earlier —to see their real meaning.

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" The Labour Party believes that the only final guarantee of peace lies in the development of a Co-operative World Commonwealth of Nations," says the new programme of action, *For Socialism and Peace*. The Basle resolution of 1912—to which the Labour Party leaders subscribed only to betray it in 1914, like their colleagues in France and Germany—did not believe this. It said, on the contrary :

> Co-operation on an imposing scale between the workers of all countries has been established by the fact that the proletarians of all countries have simultaneously taken up the fight against imperialism ; each section of the International has opposed to the Government of its country the resistance of the proletariat, and mobilised the public opinion of its nation against military ventures of every sort. This co-operation has hitherto done much to safeguard international peace, which is being threatened by ever greater dangers. The fear of the ruling class that a proletarian revolution might break out as the consequence of a world war has turned out to be a material guarantee of peace. Therefore the Congress proposes to the Social Democratic Parties to continue this activity. . . .

Thus Socialist tradition saw the final guarantee of peace in a proletarian revolution and co-operation between the workers of the various countries. The Southport resolution sees it in " a Co-operative World Commonwealth of Nations "—which means, translated into terms of present-day politics, co-operation between governments, irrespective of whether they are capitalist or not.

A Labour Government, says the Southport decision, would propose to all nations at Geneva a bold plan for disarmament and for international organisation of security, based upon (i) abolition of all arms forbidden to Germany under the Versailles Treaty, of air forces, etc. ; (ii) a non-aggression treaty ; (iii) the settlement of disputes by pacific means. This sounds better—until we remember that, when the Soviet Delegation at the Disarmament Conference (1927-30) was fighting for the most drastic disarmament proposals, the Labour Party Executive did not raise its little finger to organise a campaign in Britain to support them. When the Soviet Government was fighting for non-aggression pacts with its neighbours, and the menace of Japanese attack grew real and pressing (1931-34), the Labour Party Executive did not even make the elementary demand for a pact of non-aggression between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. When the Soviet Government gave the world a practical example of how to encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes, by signing pacts defining the aggressor with 13 of its neighbours (1933), the Labour Party Executive made no challenge to the British Government for leading the opposition to the Soviet proposals at Geneva.

A Labour Government, we learn, will press for " international planning," on the ground that chaotic conditions arising out of unbridled competition . . . " breed vested interests whose scramble for markets

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and for fields of investments are a direct cause of war." Thus it is not vested interests, *i.e.*, capitalism, which create "chaotic conditions," but *vice versa*. Only institute planned capitalism, says *For Socialism and Peace*, and war can be averted. Thus consistency is maintained in the resolution, at the expense of all Socialist traditions which have ever declared that economic chaos and modern wars spring from the very nature of capitalism.

These three points are preparatory, however, for the kernel of this section of *For Socialism and Peace*—the proposal of a Peace Act. Under this Act: (i) Great Britain would be bound not to resort to force as an instrument of national policy; (ii) she must comply with instructions from the League of Nations, "in case of having to use force in self-defence"; (iii) the Labour Party "must unflinchingly support our Government in all the risks and consequences of fulfilling its duty to take part in collective action against a peacebreaker"; this means being prepared militarily and financially to join in such "collective action"!

It is a far cry from that declaration even to the pledge of the Hamburg Congress of 1923 about refusing to vote for military credits—unless the Labour Party Executive are prepared to give a certificate to British battleships, tanks and bombing planes that they have no "imperialist objects." But as the Labour Party Executive, while pledging themselves not to use force as an instrument of national policy, cheerfully endorsed its use in India and Irak during both Labour Governments (*e.g.*, the Bengal Ordinances and air bombing of 1924, the Meerut Trial in 1929-31), we must conclude that they are ready to issue such a certificate. And why not? If a Co-operative World Commonwealth can be achieved without first overthrowing the capitalists, if international planning can end the chaos of capitalist society without eliminating the capitalists, why should not British tanks and aeroplanes kill Indian villagers and workmen without having any "national" or "imperialist" objects? The dying Indians, on the North-West frontier mountains or on the streets of Bombay, could always take comfort from the thought that this was part of the "risks and consequences" of the British Labour Party supporting "our Government" in its preparations for collective action against a peacebreaker!

But what is this collective action against a peacebreaker? What is the return which it will give to British Labour, as a reward for sinking its struggle against British Imperialism, its belief in working-class internationalism, and even any opposition to the Army, Navy and Air Force Estimates? The reply given in *For Socialism and Peace* is of the vaguest, as befits a document drawn up with an eye to the General Election. We have to turn for our answer to the second document adopted by the

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Southport Conference (after having been adopted a month before at the Trades Union Congress)—the memorandum on *War and Peace.*

We learn from this memorandum (*Report to Southport Conference*, p. 101), that the collective peace system means the League of Nations plus any other States which agree to co-operate with it. "Labour's policy is directed to developing the collective system in such a way as to make it a sure guarantee of peace." That is to say, a sure guarantee of peace could come out of co-operation between the 60 odd capitalist and imperialist States in the world, *plus* the one State where the workers are the ruling class—the U.S.S.R.—*plus* Britain under a Labour Government (where Lords Melchett, Londonderry and Co. would still be the ruling ciass, but which wouldn't be imperialist because Herbert Morrison, instead of Ramsay MacDonald, had kissed the King's hands.

And under this system, *War and Peace* tells us (p. 103), it would be possible to distinguish between a war of an aggressive character and one undertaken in defence of the collective peace system.

> Labour is emphatically opposed to any form of aggressive war, but we recognise that there might be circumstances under which the Government of Great Britain might have to use its military and naval forces in support of the League in restraining an aggressor nation which declined to submit to the authority of the League and which flagrantly used military measures in defiance of its pledged word.

Who is the League? 59 capitalist governments and 1 Soviet Government. The League's "action or inaction at any given moment is the resultant of the policies of the Government members of the League, especially the most influential Governments. And no Government has more influence at Geneva than the British." In other words, British Imperialism with its huge fighting fleet and chain of naval bases, its gigantic empire and thousands of millions of foreign investments, its tentacles penetrating into every country, its wealthy, experienced and merciless ruling class; French Imperialism, Italian Imperialism, German, Japanese and American, Imperialism—who are all to be brought back into, or in association with, the League—with their mutual rivalries clashing and double-crossing at a thousand points of the globe, with their respective ambitions to gain or retain world domination of markets and fields of investments, with their finely-tempered machinery of press, pulpit, cinema and radio, for influencing and mobilising the "popular will"—the resultant of all their policies is to be the collective restraint of "aggressor nations."

We pass over the point that, so long as British capitalists continue to own the mines, railways, land, factories and banks of Great Britain—not to mention plantations and mines in the colonies—they will always be strong enough to do what Japan has done, if necessary, and flout the League. But—"no government has more influence at Geneva than the

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British " : and not only at Geneva, but over half the world, through its economic power, its secret understandings and open alliances. Is it not British Imperialism which has encouraged Japan in the Far East, and would gladly see Japan turn her armies against the Soviet Union—if only to divert them from Hong Kong, Malaya and India ? There is at least strong ground for replying to the Labour Party memorandum that for Great Britain to act " in support of the League " is very little different from acting in support of itself and its allies, once they make up their mind on war.

But, says the Memorandum, " loyalty to the world community on the issue of Peace overrides any national duty, and notably our duty to the Government in war." This loyalty is still limited in nature, " owing to the limited character of the treaty obligations that bind us to the rest of the world community." But it does involve three obligations—the same as those involved by the Peace Act referred to earlier—slightly extended by " refusal to serve or support our Government if it were ever condemned as an aggressor by the League or designated itself as an aggressor by becoming involved in war after refusing arbitration."

These are brave words indeed. But, after all, they were passed by a Conference calling itself Socialist (yes, the word occurs fully five times in a closely printed document of five pages). And one is therefore entitled to ask : " Which ' world community ' ? " The 1912 resolution of the International Socialist Congress was very clear on this point. In its closing sentence, it called on the workers and socialists of all countries : " Oppose to the capitalist world of exploitation and mass murders the proletarian world of peace and the brotherhood of all nations ! " Either the Labour Party Conference meant loyalty to the proletarian world community—in which case duty to the League of Nations, like duty to the British Government, has nothing to do with the case. Loyalty to the proletarian world means, first and foremost, the mutual loyalty of the proletarians on either side of the barbed wire.

So also with the " treaty obligations which bind us to the rest of the world community." What treaty obligations bind Socialists and workers ? The resolution of 1912 recognised one very definite obligation : " The proletarians regard as a crime shooting at one another for the sake of increasing the profits of the capitalists, satisfying the ambitions of dynasties, or doing it for the glory of the secret treaties of diplomacy." Supposing Germany goes to war to get back her lost colonies, Silesia or the Lorraine ironfields—are British workers justified, by treaty obligations under the League which consecrate these territories as sources of profits for British, French and Polish capitalists, in shooting their German brothers ? Supposing Japan, baulked of her Siberian ambitions by fear of the Red Army, turns her attention to Australia, the East Indies and the

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Philippines: are the "treaty obligations" which hallow the exclusive rights of British, Dutch and American capitalists to plunder and shoot the peoples of those countries, more sacred than the obligations of British and Japanese workers not to shoot at one another?

"But what about refusing to serve if Great Britain is condemned as an aggressor by the League, or condemns herself as one?" asks the Labour Party Executive. We have already seen what chance there is of Great Britain being "condemned" by the League. And to think—last and pitiful refuge—that British Imperialism will ever let itself be manœuvred into a position, in a conflict with any other Imperialism, when it "designates itself as an aggressor"—by refusing arbitration (who is to be the arbitrator?) or by any other slip—is to put a very low estimate on the intelligence of the British capitalist class. First, because they know perfectly well that in a capitalist world the number of States supporting them will be determined by consideration of pounds, shillings and pence, and of battleships, tanks and bombing planes, and not by a resolution at Geneva. Secondly, because they know that at home the extent of support they will get in an imperialist war will be determined, not by whether they can represent themselves as the party of injured innocence (all capitalist governments can do that at a moment's notice, witness Japan), still less by whether they can be shown to have broken "their pledged word" (ask the miners and cotton spinners when the British capitalists ever showed respect for their pledged word), but by whether there is any organised working-class movement to fight them.

And that is just the point on which the Memorandum is fairly definite. In flat contradiction to the decision at Hastings, it declares that the best thing which can be done is to reaffirm the Standing Order 8 (*h*) of the Trades Union Congress, laying down that a Special Congress should be called in the event of danger of war. The importance of this section of the Memorandum lies particularly in the fact that it legislates, not for that golden future when a Labour Government has begun the construction of a "Co-operative World Commonwealth," in which the Union Jack flying over concentration camps in India is at peace with the Swastika flying over concentration camps in Prussia, but with the *present* danger of a new world war. The pitiful character of the arguments used to oppose the pledge of a General Strike is all the more remarkable.

One is the "lack of an independent trade union movement" in the Fascist countries, or its weakness elsewhere. This at bottom is the same argument as that used in 1914—that the German, French, British, Russian workers are taking no action against their governments, and why should we? That way leads, plainly and openly, to a new betrayal. The answer is that given by the Bolsheviks in 1914-1917, and proved correct when the German and Austrian armies broke up in 1918: that

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the most powerful means of undermining the morale of the enemy, of letting loose a revolutionary working class and peasant struggle in his rear, is to set the example of a General Strike, of fraternisation at the front, and of a Socialist insurrection.

A second argument (one of the very few used at the Conference itself) is that "the responsibility for stopping war ought not to be placed upon the Trade Union Movement alone." Even the most fervent advocates of a General Strike against War would never advocate that it should—or believe that it could. It is perfectly obvious that a General Strike, conducted with spirit and determination, and particularly on the eve of a war, could never remain confined within trade unionist framework. It would quite legitimately draw into action millions upon millions who ordinarily remain quite outside the scope of the trade unions. But it must be equally obvious that it would be the privilege and duty of the best organised section of the working class—that which is accustomed to class action through the trade unions—to take the lead and strike the first blow.

The feeblest argument of all, however, was reserved for the Conference itself, when E. Bevin profoundly remarked that "the Executives can't give orders to the trade unions"; and, as usual, there were dark hints of how militant Executives had been let down by their backward members. No one asks the Executives to "give orders." If only they took the half-hearted steps for a General Strike against War which they did in 1925-6 for joint action in support of the miners, the workers themselves would need no further encouragement—from them. But with the weight of propaganda against a general strike, it would be surprising indeed if the Executives could "give orders" when war breaks out—except orders to join up, reinforced as in 1914 by the machinery of "leaving certificates," Munition Tribunals and "dilution."

Thus both *For Socialism and Peace* and *War and Peace* resolve themselves into elaborate and flowery arguments for (i) rejecting the idea of international working-class solidarity; (ii) substituting for it support of a system under which British Imperialism would be free to wage what wars it required. That this is so can be seen from yet a third document which was submitted to the Conference—the Executive Committee's report itself. On page 17 it explains that "in view of the recent events on the Continent, it was felt that there might be occasions when the Movement would assist any defensive action taken to preserve the nation and its democratic institutions."

It will be seen that this statement reveals the Executives' case in all its nakedness. Here is no flowery language about world citizenship, no long-winded bowing and scraping to the League, no rubbish about surrendering national sovereignty. Plain, straightforward and brutal, it

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uses the exact jingo language of 1914. Did not the millions die in Flanders and Galicia, on the Somme and at Caporetto, to preserve their "own" nation? If "democratic institutions" were the tag for Britain and France, were not "German culture" and "the Russian soul" the tag for the Kaiser and the Tsar? Are not the Japanese militarists defending a still loftier purpose in Manchuria, the cause of the gods themselves from whom, so General Araki informs us, the Japanese nation is descended?

"But would you not defend the nation?" ask the Labour jingoes. "Would you allow the aggressor to walk over us?" asks Mr. Swales. "Would you let armed dictatorship smash the trade union movement of the world?" asks Mr. Bromley. "Would you like the Brownshirts to come over here?" asks Mr. Hicks. Just as their predecessors did in 1914! The enemy is in our own country, we reply with Karl Liebknecht. Our first duty to the nation is to protect it against the most dangerous aggressor of all—British Imperialism. If we make that armed dictatorship powerless to smash the trade union movement in India and Egypt, we shall have struck the strongest blow we can at all dictatorships. If we carry on a revolutionary struggle against imperialist war in Britain, we shall help the heroic German working class themselves to smash the Brownshirts. Still more important, we shall put a Workers' Government in power in Britain that will be able for the first time, if necessary, to say that it is defending the true nation—the working class—against Fascists of every nationality, and in repelling attacks from outside pursues no imperialist ends. The way to do this was clearly shown by the Bolsheviks in 1917: the General Strike and fraternisation of the soldiers were only the first steps to turning the imperialist war into a civil war.

Something of this was said at the Southport Conference, as much as the peculiar "democracy" of Labour Party procedure allowed. *Moore* (Croydon) asked if there was "any essential difference between the attitude of the Labour Party and that of the Conservatives and National Government." *Falconer* (Transport Workers) declared that the British Government is already "waging war on India," and that "the victory of the British Government in a war means defeat for the British workers." *Wellock* (Stourbridge) ridiculed the idea of "expecting peace and disarmament to issue from a capitalist and imperialist-dominated League," and asserted that "all capitalist governments are aggressors." *Ponsonby* (House of Lords) reminded the Conference that defence against an aggressor is "an old tag," used for driving the workers of various countries against one another. *Mellor* (Socialist League) pointed out that war arises out of capitalism itself, and asked how the failure of the General Strike could be prevented "if we don't begin the propaganda for it now." *Wheate* (Manchester) declared that the League of Nations had never come down on the side of the oppressed, and that he "thought we always stood for tearing up our capitalist treaty obligations."

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The remarkable feature of the debate, however, was not the utter failure of the speakers for the Executive—Henderson, Noel Baker, Bevin, Wilmot, Attlee—to meet any of these points, let alone do more than repeat the phrases of the official resolutions. True, Noel Baker made an impressive declaration that the League had " turned Yugoslavia out of Albania in 1927." Careful research has failed to establish when the Yugoslavians were ever in Albania. It has revealed, however, that in 1925 Albania came under the financial domination of Italy through a bank with its headquarters in Rome : in 1926 the dictator of Albania, Zogu, signed a treaty of " friendship and arbitration " with Italy : and in 1927 he completed the process by a " Treaty of Alliance "—similar to that existing between Britain and Irak. Thus the great effectiveness of the League (if it played any part at all) resulted in consolidating the Italian yoke upon Albania.

However, the real feature of the debate was the attempt to justify the Executive's policy by pointing to the Soviet entry into the League. It was Citrine, at the Trades Union Congress, who first had recourse to this " devastating " argument. But from the systematic building up of a " conference atmosphere " by dragging in references to the U.S.S.R. it almost appeared, by the end of the debate, that this was the last plank in the Executive's platform. Wedgwood Benn's meeting on Saturday, September 29 : the President's speech on Monday, morning October 1 : an emergency resolution read out in the afternoon : Henderson's speech moving it the following morning, and a second speech moving *For Socialism and Peace :* the speeches of Bevin, Wilmot and Attlee during the discussion—all these occasions were used to bring out the triumphant argument that " we must work for peace as the Soviet Government has decided to do " (Henderson).

It is only necessary[1] to point out some slight differences between the position of the Soviet Government and that of the Labour Party. The Soviet Government is in power as the result of the overthrow and violent suppression of the Russian landowners and capitalist class, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the territory under its authority former ruling and subject races constitute to-day an alliance of equal peoples, free from capitalism or imperialist oppression. Pursuing therefore no imperialist ends itself, the Soviet Government has always striven for peaceful relations between itself and the capitalist states, in order to have a breathing-space for the building of a classless society, and confident of the ultimate revolutionary destiny of the workers abroad. In its struggle for peace, made possible by the strengthening of the Soviet Union in all respects and by international working class support, the

[1]A reasoned statement on the whole question has been published by the Friends of the Soviet Union, 33 Ormond Yard, W.C.1, under the title : " The Soviet Union and the League of Nations " (1d.).

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Soviet Government has also been assisted by the divisions between the capitalist states, which it has never omitted to utilise in the interests of peace. In the days when the League was only an instrument in the hands of triumphant Anglo-French imperialism, which bestrode the world like a colossus over the prostrate body of German capitalism, the Soviet Government could not of course enter the League ; nor was it wanted there. To-day the world situation, to put it mildly, has somewhat changed, and the League has not quite lived up to expectations in its original rôle. The Soviet Government has already made good use of the Disarmament Conference and the World Economic Conference to throw up obstacles in the way of war, and why should it not do so in the League?

The Labour Party, on the other hand, does not represent a working class in power over an overthrown capitalist class, nor—more important——does it want to be. Its aim, we learn from *For Socialism and Peace*, is " to plan a new society within the structure of the old," *i.e.*, without disturbing the capitalists. Consequently in practice it drags at the tail of the Conservatives and Liberals, and when in office strove to show that it administered the Empire, promoted " public " corporations (in which capitalist trusts get a corporate right to fleece the public), etc., as efficiently as the other parties. Consequently, again, if the Labour Party in office urges the workers to pin their hopes of peace upon the League of Nations—and still more so when it does this in opposition—it is simply continuing the work of the Tories and Liberals, which is to divert the workers' attention by all possible means from the real hope of peace—the struggle against their " own " capitalists. A Labour Government in the League is still a British Imperialist Government—as the German workers learned to their cost, when they were presented with the Dawes Plan in 1924, and the Labour Government's demand at the Hague to " pay up " in 1930.

The Soviet Government is in the League to pursue the working-class objective of fighting for peace and exposing imperialist war plans. British Imperialism (whether working through a Labour Government or not) is in the League to pursue its own imperialist ends, which enormously increase the peril of war. If Socialists ought to support the Soviet Union's work in the League, for that very reason it follows that they should oppose the Labour Party's conception of the League as a " collective peace system."

Nor is it true that, as Henderson stated, the Soviet Government considers the League " a force for peace." Stalin a year ago said it may be " somewhat of an obstruction that could, even to a certain extent, hinder the outbreak of war." Litvinov at the League Assembly declared (September 18, 1934) : " Far be it from me to overrate the opportunities and means of the League of Nations for the organisation of peace. I realise, better perhaps than any of you, how limited these means are. I

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am aware that the League does not possess the means for the complete abolition of war."

Equally untrue is the statement, made by both Henderson and Wilmot, that the Soviet Union has " agreed to accept all the obligations of the Covenant "—and particularly the sanctions by which the Labour Party's precious " collective peace system " is to be enforced. On this Litvinov was explicit :

> Had we taken part in drawing up the Covenant of the League we would have contested certain of its articles. In particular, we would have objected to the provision in Articles 12 and 15, for the legislation in certain instances of war, and that is why I stated in my letter of the 15th to the President of the Assembly our satisfaction at the proposals to alter these articles. Further, we would have objected to Article 22, on the system of mandates. We also deprecate the absence in Article 23 of undertakings to ensure race equality. All this, however, has not been important enough to prevent the Soviet Union from entering the League, especially since any new member of an organisation can be morally responsible only for decisions made with its participation and agreement.

There were some Labour Party speakers (for example, Mr. Wilmot), who even pleaded that the collective peace system would make possible British support for the U.S.S.R. if the latter is attacked by Japan or Nazi Germany. Let alone the probability that such an attack would be more likely to find support than opposition from British imperialism, can it seriously be advanced that the British capitalist class will ever permit, let alone engage in, a war *in support of* the land of proletarian dictatorship ? When imperialist states join their capitalist allies in wars, all history shows that they do so in pursuit of their own ends, not to " support " anyone. What would be the ends of British imperialism ? To grab the Japanese colonies, or its monopoly of plunder in North China ; to break up Germany still more, and crush a dangerous rival. It does not require a genius to realise that these are very different from the ends which the Red Army would pursue if it were forced to take up arms against a Japanese or German attack. And the outcome would be probably—*as it already was in* 1918—that British imperialism, having gained its own ends, would join with the Fascist forces of its late enemy to attack the Soviet Union.

The Labour Party policy as defined at Southport is a policy of preparing to lead the workers into a new war. As Frank Rowlands said at the Weymouth Trades Union Congress, the new Socialist leaders are not even waiting until a new August, 1914, as the old leaders did ; they are giving a public assurance of betrayal beforehand. But forewarned is forearmed. Every worker who values peace must join, without delay and with *all his energies, in exposing and fighting the Labour Party's war policy tooth and nail.*

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THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE: WHAT NEXT?

By WILLIAM RUST

WHAT will the Socialist League do now that all of its amendments to "Socialism and Peace" have been defeated and the decisions of the Southport Labour Party Conference reveal that the next Labour Government is fully committed to a policy of parliamentarism, capitalist reorganisation, and support of imperialist war?

Will the Socialist League boldly organise a fight against the Southport decisions and join in the building up of the united front of action against fascism, war and hunger, or will it toe the line and wait until it is permitted to stage another policy fight on the floor of the Labour Party Conference in three years' time?

These are important questions because there is no doubt that the Socialist League could play a big part in strengthening the united working-class front if it accepted the logic of the Southport decisions and made a decisive break with past policy and tactics.

At Southport the League suffered a heavy defeat. This was to be expected as the block vote system operated by the bureaucracy ensured the automatic defeat of all left-wing proposals. But the defeat was made all the more conspicuous by the running away tactics of the League leaders. The League not only held aloof from the fight on the united front and the questions of the immediate line of the working-class struggle against Fascism and war, but it even retreated when the discussion turned on paper programmes and the policy of a third Labour Government. After a week of defeat and retreat the final touch of unreality was supplied by the leading spokesman of the Socialist League, W. Mellor, who, after the voting down of all of his amendments, declared that "the conference had contributed to the building of the new Socialist Society." (*Daily Herald*, October 6, 1934.)

It is unlikely that Mr. Mellor's enthusiasm will be widely echoed by those conference delegates who voted for the Socialist League proposals as the only possible means of expressing their desire for a militant policy: and if the other leaders of the League share Mr. Mellor's satisfaction then there is no doubt that they will in time alienate themselves from that big volume of opinion in the Labour Party which has been alarmed by the Southport decisions and is not at all impressed by the tactics of the Socialist League there.

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So far the Socialist League has been a left wing lavish with socialist propaganda, but resolutely avoiding all questions of immediate struggle and concentrating on the advocacy of a left programme for the next Labour Government. This latter question has now been settled so far as official Labour policy is concerned, and according to Standing Orders cannot be rediscussed for another three years. Southport therefore represents a turning point for the Socialist League: no change in policy and tactics will be an open admission of futility.

The Executive Committee of the Labour Party made no concessions to the Socialist League at Southport. The labour leaders were so intent on preparing for the next election, so determined to display their "sanity" and to avoid the stigma of militancy that might mean the loss of middle-class votes that they even spurned to accept those League amendments which had been watered down to practically nothing.

Thus the anæmic and almost meaningless amendment ("Parliament must be made effective, etc.,") to the statement of Labour's aims was rejected with sneers and jeers. "The attack of the Socialist League has been as mild a fizzle as ever was . . . The amendment as it now appeared on the agenda has been reduced to a skeleton in italics. . . . 'I should be ashamed,' said Mr. Morrison in a bantering tone, 'to bring up such a mild Liberal programme as that. Take the third clause of the amendment. It might have come from the Executive itself.'" (Laughter.) (Herbert Morrison, *Manchester Guardian*, October 3, 1934.)

All the talk indulged in at the Hastings Conference about a Labour Government arming itself with emergency powers and taking dictatorial measures in the interests of the workers, went up in smoke. The Socialist League's retreat brought ridicule on its head which it could not escape, even though Cripps made a lawyer-like attempt to claim the Executive's willingness to insert a paragraph on the House of Lords in the new programme, "Socialism and Peace," as a victory for himself. This paragraph originally included in an Executive report on parliamentary procedure, reads as follows:

> A Labour Government meeting with sabotage from the House of Lords would take immediate steps to overcome it and will in any event take steps during its term of office to pass legislature abolishing the House of Lords as a legislative chamber.

There is obviously a considerable difference between this loosely phrased conditional promise and the Socialist League's proposed Emergency Powers Act and swoop on the Lords, but Sir Stafford Cripps accepted this relic of pre-war Liberalism with great pleasure and complimented the Executive Committee for the way in which it had settled the Hasting's conflict over parliamentary procedure. No wonder the *Manchester Guardian* remarked that the League leaders have changed their

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mind and " that their retreat has begun by the giving up of what seemed to be their cardinal point of strategy." (*Manchester Guardian*, October 2, 1934.)

When the debate on compensation came up the Socialist Leaguers were again trapped by their own inconsistency and contradictory statements. In place of the " net reasonable maintainable value " or full compensation as advocated by the Executive, the League proposed " *income allowances for a period of years.*" Morrison thereupon taunted Cripps with being in practice an advocate of full compensation, as he had drafted the compensation clauses of the London Passenger Transport Act, and quoted G. R. Mitchison, a Socialist League writer, as advocating in his book, " The First Workers' Government," that the railways, by way of compensation, should receive " twenty-four years' guaranteed annuities to the amount of the profits which such an undertaking might have been expected to earn as a going concern under the previous system."

In any case Cripps' speech, justifying partial compensation as " the price of a peaceful transition to a new economic state," conceded the very principle which the Executive were defending in relation to full compensation and exposed the unreal character of the debate apart from the inconsistencies mentioned. If the transition to Socialism has to be bought from the capitalists, it is obvious that they will stand out for the highest price and will accept not a penny under their present profit, thus ensuring that public ownership will not mean transition to Socialism but to monopoly state capitalism. Mellor seemed to understand it and even pointed out that the London Passenger Transport Board had created a new class of rentiers, but he clung to the principle that compensation by consent and not expropriation by the working class was the way to Socialism.

The debate on war policy reached a higher level and the League was able to score heavily against the Executive because the new programme, in effect renouncing the general strike and supporting imperialist war, is a direct reversal of the unanimous Hastings resolution a year ago. But it was again possible for the official side to quote a Cripps' speech delivered in Parliament in support of the League of Nations contradictory to Socialist League criticism of the League of Nations and advocacy of an alliance of socialist states in order to prevent war.

Every honest Socialist Leaguer must now admit that the " For Socialism and Peace " programme adopted at Southport, even though plentifully besprinkled with promises of higher standards for the workers, means that a Labour Government cannot possibly fight against capitalism and that the Labour Party is now placing all its cards on an alliance with the capitalist class.

Public corporations, full compensation, parliamentarism, no strikes, preparations for war. Such a programme will strengthen the menace

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of fascism and war. The third Labour Government is already committed to a far more extensive capitalist programme than the second which proved so disastrous to the working class.

But it would be fatal to limit the opposition to the programme merely to attempts to secure the adoption of militant pledges. This programme for a future Labour Government expresses the essence of the *present* line of the Labour Party.

The Southport Conference reveals that the Labour leaders are fully committed to a policy of co-operation with the capitalists in all spheres, they are basing the entire strategy of the working-class movement on preparations for the next general election, and using the cry of "A Third Labour Government" in order to paralyse the organisation of united working-class action against Fascism, war and poverty.

The leaders made no bones about it. The united front was quickly rejected, and the conference took on an open pre-election character. Every question was weighed in the election balance. "It was legitimate to consider the electoral repercussions of any policy the party might adopt, 'We all do it, he went on, and the nearer we get to the polling day the more we do it.'" (Laughter.) (Herbert Morrison, *Manchester Guardian*, October 5, 1934.)

But it is just this co-operation with capitalism and refusal to fight to-day that will inevitably bring to nought all the fine promises about a Labour Government raising the workers' standards, maintaining peace and abolishing the menace of Fascism. *If there is no united front to-day Fascism will continue to advance.* The Sedition Bill will soon be placed on the Statute Book, the segregation of the unemployed into slave camps is being prepared and the Mosley Fascists are being systematically encouraged by capitalist interests. *If there is no united front to-day the war menace will become ever greater.* Huge new armaments are being piled up and the crash can come at any moment unless the working class is strong enough to resist. *If there is no united front to-day the workers' standards will continue to decline.* The cost of living is rising, unemployment benefit is being slashed and slumdom is increasing. The workers are demanding better conditions, but lack of unity prevents success. The railwaymen are given a paltry concession, the South Wales miners are fobbed off with arbitration, the weavers and boot and shoe operatives are threatened with new wage cuts.

A large number of Labour Party workers are aware of this, and they by no means intend to wait passively the outcome of the third Labour Government. At the September Conference of the London Trades Council on Fascism, about one-third of the delegates demanded a policy of action. It is also certain that very many of the local labour party delegates at Southport voted for the Socialist League because they wanted

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a policy of action and not only because they favoured left amendments to the official programme.

This opposition will grow and develop whether the Socialist League fights or not. But it is equally true to say that the Socialist League could play a big part in helping forward this opposition which is instinctively fighting against the leaders who are attempting to drag the British workers along the fatal path trod by German Social Democracy.

Up to now the Socialist League has been only a docile, officially approved opposition, in basic agreement with the Labour Party leadership that the strategy of the working class must be to wait for the next general election and to place all hopes on the return of a Labour Government. It has never acted according to the conclusions stated in its own pamphlet, namely, that " Events in Europe have shown that a policy of reformism in the Trade Union and Socialist Movements have not availed to stem the tide of Fascism. It has indeed led to a weakening of the workers' forces and paved the way to disaster." (" Forward to Socialism.")

Such a left wing is tolerated and even welcomed by the officialdom and its leader, Sir Stafford Cripps, has now been taken on to the Executive Committee. So long as the Socialist League acts in this way it is helping the official leaders by canalising doubts and discontent into harmless channels.

If after Southport the Socialist League remains in the same position as before, and still refuses to take part in the building of the united front of the working class, that will be its own condemnation as an organisation which has become completely allied with leaders who by their policy of co-operation with capitalism and opposition to independent working-class struggle are assisting the advance of Fascism in this country.

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THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

By R. PAGE ARNOT

18th October : The Civil War is still raging in Spain. There is still a General Strike in Madrid. Through the complete Press censorship the heroic battles of the fighters in the Asturias is echoing throughout Europe. The position is not lost. Within Spain or without an extra effort in solidarity and struggle may tip the balance. A slackening of effort may give the Spanish Fascists a temporary victory. Our duty is to carry on a united front struggle to the uttermost in support of the workers and peasants of Spain.

WHEN the Spanish Prime Minister, Señor Samper handed in the resignation of his six-months Cabinet on October 1st, the plottings of the counter-revolutionary groups came to the surface. There was hardly the pretence of an inner conflict amongst the reactionaries. Even the correspondent of the " bloody old Times " (which to-day was crowing over the Fascist successes in Spain) was forced to record his impression on October 1 that :

> the fall of the Cabinet took place according to a plan arranged beforehand.

The moment for the provocation of civil war was come. Publicly it was discussed : and all Spain knew that when the Fascist followers of Gil Robles came into the Cabinet, the tocsin would have sounded for civil war.

Don Alejandro Lerroux, " veteran Radical leader," was the prearranged choice of President Alcala Zamora for the attempted strangling of the Spanish Revolution. This aged pander for the blackest reaction, who had already, a year before, steered a short-lived Cabinet towards Fascism, was now, once more as Premier, to carry the business to its conclusion.

All the forces of reaction were to be concentrated to set up an open Fascist dictatorship. The terror, already in operation, was to be intensified. And everything was to be done as speedily as possible. It was a race between revolution and counter-revolution.

On the other hand the forces of the revolution were rapidly mustering. The six months of the Samper-Robles Cabinet (with the Robles groups nominally outside) had also seen a simultaneous ripening of the class struggle and the struggle of the oppressed nationalities (Catalans, Basques, Galicians).

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For three and a half years, ever since the Monarchy was overthrown on April 14, 1931, there had been a long-drawn out struggle. It had not taken many months for the workers and peasants to realise that the substitution for Alfonso of the government of allied capitalists and landlords had brought neither land, bread nor freedom.

But the development of the revolution had been hindered by the two years' Government of Señor Azaña, participated in by the social-democratic leaders like Largo Caballero. And during this period of deferred hopes and unfulfilled promises, a breathing space was given to the forces of blackest reaction to build up their organisations. When the two years were up, the left Republicans and social-democrats were cast aside like tools that had served their purpose : and for the last fifteen months, reinforced by the events in Germany and Austria, the drive to Fascism had gone on apace.

But the development of the revolution was now also gathering speed. The economic crisis in which the production of coal had gone down by a quarter, of steel by half and of iron-ore by two-thirds, had brought unemployment and increasing misery to the workers : while the fall in agricultural exports combined with the greed and oppression of the landlords and capitalists had ruined the vast masses of the peasantry. Action after action of the workers and peasants in these last months shewed greater and greater militancy and a growing realisation that a decisive moment was approaching. Under this powerful pressure, the Socialist leaders began to turn round and speak in terms of a revolutionary way out of the crisis, of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat : while the open right-wing leaders were dismissed. Although the Anarchist leaders remained in their old positions, from which they had so often disorganised the working class struggle, more and more amongst the rank and file of the anarcho-syndicalist unions were realising the need of a struggle for power and all that this involved.

The thirty days of September were days of class collisions, with the attacks of the counter-revolutionaries met by revolutionary counter-attacks. On the 2nd September the Samper Cabinet arrested the Basque mayors, who with their Councils, had held, five days earlier, an inter-provincial conference at Vittoria : this was followed (on September 7) by a refusal of the Basque Municipalities to carry out their functions. On the 8th September the gathering in Madrid, under the central Government of the big landlords of Catalonia, was met by an anti-Fascist General Strike both in Madrid and in the Asturias : *which* strike was on such a scale and of such militancy as to make the Fascists give ground. On the 13th September, the Communist Party of Spain and the Spanish Socialist Party engaged in a united front. The Communists entered the Workers' Alliance with the declared object of securing that in future

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the delegates in the Workers' Alliance would be elected democratically at meetings of " trade unions, proletarian mass organisations, factory, peasants and unemployed committees " : the intention being also to bring in the workers in the Anarcho-Syndicalist unions, the peasants and the unemployed. On the day following (14th September) 90,000 young socialist and young Communists, assembled in a United Front meeting in the Madrid Stadium, protested against a new Government decree aimed at making the Youth organisations illegal. Within ten days the Samper Government took a further step to provoke civil war by decreeing (on 23rd September) a " state of alarm " to exist in Spain. On the last day of September, Señor Martinez Barrios, " Radical " Prime Minister a short nine months ago and former henchman of Lerroux, started back in horror from the Fascist goal to which he had prepared the way and declared :

> From the Right only a military dictatorship can be expected. The advent of the Right to power would bring civil war.

On the next day the " advent of the Right " began.

On Wednesday, 3rd October, the retiring Minister of the Interior issued a civil war communique, saying :

> the authorities possess maps and statistics covering all Spain, shewing the forces at the Government's disposal, the number of Socialists, Syndicalists and Communists, the public services and other details in order that there should not be the slightest delay in adopting measures to suppress a revolt.

By Thursday, 4th October, Lerroux announced that the Fascists had been taken into his new Cabinet : the tocsin had sounded : and on the same evening the General Strike began.

In Madrid, Barcelona, the Asturias and other parts of the North generally, response was immediate and complete. No delay : midnight Thursday-Friday in Madrid saw a complete withdrawal of labour. Even postal officials and bank employees came out on strike. Throughout the week-end a general strike was declared at town after town in the South.

In the Asturias the general strike passed immediately into an armed uprising. On the Friday, miners, *armed and organised in workers' committees* (*Soviets*), drove out, disarmed and defeated the police, became masters of their own villages, cut the wires, blockaded the railways, seized the Government centre —OVIEDO—and hoisted the Red Flag on the Town Hall.

In Madrid on the Friday there was only sporadic shooting ; it seems mainly to have been in the way of frightening middle-class blacklegs who were trying to run the trams and other transport. The Government,

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whose first step had been to impose a *complete press censorship*[1] was able to effect many arrests.

In Barcelona the strike was general, in spite of the Anarchist National Confederation of Labour trying to hold back the workers by an announcement that they would not call the workers out on Friday but would issue a strike call " to-morrow " (the famous Spanish " mañana "). Not only was the strike nearly complete : but the postal employees *took control of the telegraphs and telephones.* The workers demanded arms and a declaration of a separate Catalonian Republic. Revolutionary workers' committees took possession of Sabardell, Ripollet, Sardonola and a number of other small towns of Catalonia. In Catalonia the workers' struggle coincided with the drive for independence of the Catalan petty bourgeoisie : all shops were also shut : and the Workers' Alliance threatened Don Luis Companys, President of the Catalan Generalitad (province) that they would declare the Republic if he did not.

Saturday, 6th October, dawned in Madrid with " troops confined to barracks " for forty-eight hours—a sign of Governmental nervousness. Blackleg trams lay overturned in the streets. The roads were strewn with logs and nails, while in near-by villages the revolutionaries were in complete control. In the suburb of Tetuan an attempt was made to storm the cavalry barracks : and there was some fighting in the streets. The stoppage continued complete and a food shortage began.

Saturday brought no news from the Asturias for the simple reason that the Government there was helpless and could only begin military preparations for re-conquest.

Saturday began in Catalonia with the Syndicalist National Federation of Labour at Saragossa condemning the strike. In Barcelona the strike continued firm, while the Catalan Government sought, by publishing messages to Madrid and by expressing sympathy with the strike, to " prevent the Workers' Alliance from gaining control of the situation." By Saturday evening it was necessary to go further " to prevent the Workers' Alliance from gaining control " and at 8 p.m. Don Luis Companys issued to an enthusiastic multitude the Proclamation that Catalonia had shaken off the Spanish yoke and was a Free State.

When the news reached Madrid of the Catalan Republic the workers began an armed attack on the two strategic points—the Ministry of the Interior and the building of the International Telephone and Telegraph Company. The Lerroux Government, at 10 p.m., declared martial law throughout Spain : mobilised the garrison and put Madrid under military occupation.

[1]This article is written while the censorship is in full operation : and its account of the events is dependent on the news permitted by Lerroux and Company plus the little that has leaked out otherwise.

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Up to this point the revolutionary movement had been continuously on the ascendant, though nowhere but in the Asturias had the Government been defeated. Hereafter the position begins to be uneven. The general strike spreads still further: in places the workers take up arms: regiments of soldiers cross over to the side of the workers. On the other hand the revolution suffers a big defeat in Catalonia: and the centralised military operations of the Lerroux Cabinet gain successes outside the Asturias.

When Sunday, 7th October, dawned, it brought the news of the surrender to the Spanish troops of the Catalan Republican Government, which had lasted only a very little more than eight hours. Companys had been more anxious to forstall the Workers' Alliance than to secure the armed support of Catalan peasants necessary to back his Proclamation. In Madrid, too, all seemed "tranquil," with the general strike continuing. Of the Asturias there was no news, except Governmental lies that the "red revolt" was ending and an announcement of their military, naval and airforce preparations against the miners. At this same time, Lerroux recalled to the colours 8,000 of the most reactionary army officers who had been weeded out after the fall of the monarchy.

But in Madrid, as the evening fell on Sunday, the workers made a determined attack on the police headquarters. In Barcelona there was street fighting. In Gerona (Catalonia) the troops mutinied and went over to the side of the revolution. In Lerida a fierce battle took place: barricades were thrown up and the railway station and police headquarters captured. In Corunna an attempt to storm the police headquarters was followed by actions throughout the whole province. Meantime, in the Asturias the armed miners Soviets remained in complete control.

Throughout Spain that night of October 7th/8th the civil war was bitterly fought.

On Monday, after three days civil war, the Government once more claimed victory except that their only news of the Asturias was from their bombing aeroplanes flying over Oviedo and over a countryside of red villages.

On this day Lerroux repeated Briand's twenty-five year old move and issued a mobilisation order calling all railwaymen to the colours with the threat of court-martial for all who continued on strike.

But once again on Monday evening and through the night, there was fierce fighting throughout Spain. In Madrid the attempt was made to storm the Admiralty.

All through the first seven days these were the guerilla tactics employed.

What are the most obvious political lessons that can be learned by the European working class while the civil war is still proceeding?

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Firstly, that where the Anarchists had the strongest influence over the working class there the earliest defeats took place. In Catalonia, with more than half the total proletariat of Spain, amid a petty bourgeoisie bitterly hostile to the Fascist Government of Madrid, there the weakness shewed itself soonest.

Secondly, that where the Communists had their greatest influence amongst the working class there the highest point of the civil war was reached. The Communist Party of Spain is numerically much inferior to the Socialists or the Anarchists, but its correct policy, foresight and revolutionary determination and leadership inside the united front converted the Asturias into the stronghold of the revolution.

Thirdly, that in Madrid, where on the whole Socialist influence predominates, there no effective attempt to capture the strategic points of the Government appear to have taken place until over forty-five hours had passed. The most obvious explanation of this would appear to be that the Socialist leaders had allowed themselves at this most critical of all moments to be influenced by the " anarchist traditions " of defeating the capitalists by a general strike alone : that they had failed to realise that revolution requires the most serious planning and preparation, that insurrection is an art, as Marx said, to be studied with the utmost care and applied with the utmost revolutionary determination, seizing the initiative from the counter-revolution and maintaining that initiative day by day and hour by hour until the class enemy is defeated. This is the lesson—and not the incredible repetition by the *New Leader's* (October 19th) special correspondent of the famous Menshevik judgment of 1905 that " the workers should not have taken up arms."

But finally, there is one overwhelming lesson of this Spanish civil war which is that victory is impossible unless systematic work is done to win over the armed forces. And behind this, in the case of these peasant recruits, lies the need for espousing the demands of the peasantry. Of both of these pre-requisites there appears to have been the greatest lack.

These things indeed were in the programme and activity of the Spanish Communist Party : but this Party had by no means a numerical majority amongst the working class supporting it. To have a revolutionary workers' party, following the teachings of Marx and Lenin and applying them correctly as a section of the world Party of the workers is seen from the Spanish events to be a prime necessity for the working class.

Whilst learning these lessons, and the more that may be learned as further information comes through of the heroic struggles of the masses of Spain, the main business of every British worker at this moment must be to bring aid to the Spaniards, and for this purpose to build, and act within, the widest possible united front.

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THE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS AND IRELAND'S FIGHT

By J. SHIELDS.

THE struggle of the Irish masses for a free, united and independent Ireland is rising to a new level. Under the leadership of the Irish working class, the only class which is capable of leading the revolutionary national struggle to success, the mass movement for Irish national freedom is being mobilised for vigorous assault against the stranglehold exercised by British imperialism.

Time and again the revolutionary national liberation fight in Ireland has risen to great heights, and time and again it has undergone betrayal at the hands of Irish capitalist leadership. To-day, however, a new force —the Irish proletariat—is placing itself at the head of the movement, a force which, in alliance with the farming masses, can and will victoriously carry the struggle for the Irish Republic to its end.

As the Manifesto of the Communist Party of Ireland, issued by its inaugural congress in June, 1933, points out, the national liberation of Ireland is an inevitable task which the proletariat will carry out on its way to socialism. As this Manifesto puts it :—

> The Irish working class will carry on the national independence struggle to the end, attaching to itself the mass of peasant farmers, so as to crush the power of resistance of the English imperialists and overcome the unreliability of the Irish capitalist class.
>
> The Irish proletariat will bring about a socialist revolution attaching to itself the masses of semi-proletarians in the population, so as to break the power of resistance of the capitalists and render harmless the unreliability of the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie.
>
> At the head of the peasants for an independent Ireland, at the head of all the toilers and exploited for a Workers and Farmers Irish Republic, for the dictatorship of the Proletariat—such is the historic task given to the Irish working class by the whole of the present alignment of class forces in Ireland and the position of the Irish national independence movement as an integral part of the international revolution.

An important step directed towards the building up of the united fighting front against the imperialists and the enemies of the Irish people on a nation-wide scale, was registered in Dublin on September 29 and 30, when the Irish Republican Congress assembled in the Free State capital.

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From all parts of Ireland, delegates representing republican and working-class organisations on both sides of the imperialist border which separates the North from the South, attended this Congress. All told, 186 delegates were present. These came from many Republican groups, Trade Union organisations, Tenants' Leagues, the Communist Party, the Irish Citizen Army, the Unemployed Workers' Movement, and various other bodies, and they were widely representative of the working and farming masses.

They had come together in order to plan out how to develop and carry forward that struggle which Jim Connolly and innumerable other Irish martyrs had given up their lives for—the struggle for complete Irish independence.

The Irish Republican Congress demonstrated the growing disillusionment which is seizing hold of increasing masses of the Irish people with regard to the reactionary rôle of the De Valera Government and the latter's betrayal of the national fight.

It embodied a recognition of the fact that not only is De Valera failing to conduct a struggle against British imperialism, but that he is actually, under cover of empty nationalist phrases and gestures, devoting himself to the strengthening of the power of Irish capitalism. On the one hand, De Valera's Government is striving to make use of the national feeling in order to induce the imperialists to grant Irish capitalism certain concessions, whilst at the same time he is proceeding to impose an added yoke on the shoulders of the great mass of the Irish people for the benefit of a handful of Irish capitalists.

From their own experience, the delegates to the Republican Congress have learned that the glib promises made by Fianna Fail at the last general election are merely so much moonshine. They have witnessed how while the big exporters and suchlike elements are waxing fat, the suffering and mass impoverishment of the Irish toilers is becoming more and more unbearable.

At the same time they have also been taught by experience that the petty-bourgeois leadership of the Irish Republican Army is unable and unwilling to conduct a fight. They see the latter dragging along in the tail of De Valera, and the necessity for energetic measures being taken if the national liberation struggle is to advance.

All these factors were responsible for a meeting being held by a number of well-known republican fighters last April at Athlone. In view of the situation the Athlone Conference decided to issue a call in which it was declared that owing to the failure and betrayal on the part of leadership tethered to capitalism,

> A Congress of Republican opinion must be assembled to make the Republic a main issue dominating the whole political field and to outline what are the forms of activity that move to its support.

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It was in response to this call that the Irish Republican Congress took place in Dublin, evidencing the determination of the Irish workers to take the leadership and conduct of the struggle into their own hands and to go forward in alliance with the masses of the rural areas to carry it through to a finish.

At the outset of the Congress proceedings it became evident that the main issue confronting the delegates turned on the question of the policy to be adopted. In this connection two opposing viewpoints had been brought forward in resolutions submitted by the Congress Organising Bureau.

One of these resolutions, known as *Majority Resolution A*, advocated that the main slogan of action which should go out from the Congress should be that of direct struggle for a Workers' Republic. According to this resolution it was stated that :

> only by establishing a new political and economic system of society can we assure ourselves of Freedom from English domination.

It thus presented the question in such a way that the path of struggle was depicted as leading through the socialist revolution to national independence from British imperialism.

This resolution had been brought forward by the Army Council of the Irish Citizen Army and had been adopted by a majority of the Organising Bureau which included Michael Price, R. J. Connolly and Nora Connolly O'Brien. The majority also presented a further resolution on future Congress organisation which proposed that a new political party be set up.

As an amendment to the Majority line, three members of the Organising Bureau (George Gilmore, Peadar O'Donnell and Frank Ryan), brought forward a *Minority Resolution* which urged that " the Republican Congress become the rallying centre for the mass movement expressing all the forces for complete national independence," and declared that " the dominating political task is the realisation of the Republic."

The line of struggle presented by the Minority group was therefore the line of driving forward for the smashing of the imperialist hold and securing national liberation as opening up the way for social emancipation.

The Minority also advocated in regard to the question of organisation that instead of forming a new political party, the Republican Congress should be constituted a broad united front organisation on a mass basis.

A very keen discussion took place on the two opposing policy resolutions.

The principal spokesmen who supported the Majority resolution based their arguments on the fact that the leading rôle in the struggle must be in the hands of the working class and therefore they argued, the slogan

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of Workers' Republic could alone typify the revolutionary struggle in Ireland. They further argued that only with such a slogan would it be possible to bring the workers in the North into the fight, and the view was also advanced by Michael Price that it was due to the lack of such a slogan that the national struggle in the past had failed to emerge triumphant.

That there can be no achieving of national independence unless struggle against Irish capitalism is conducted and developed is of course true. But to deduce from this as did the sponsors of the Majority resolution that the issue must be treated as though Ireland were like an ordinary capitalist country in which the purely social revolution must be begun straightaway, is entirely incorrect and extremely dangerous.

It means attempting to jump over an essential stage of the fight, a failure to take into account the vital fact of foreign imperialist domination and the unbearable exploitation which this entails for the poor farmers, that the problem of the agrarian question cannot be ignored and the immediate character of the national liberation struggle left out of the picture altogether. The national factor exercises very big influence on the whole course of the struggle. Because of national oppression the discontent of the masses of workers and peasants becomes enormously intensified, revolutionary ripening is thereby quickened and accelerated, and this facilitates and strengthens the revolutionary tide of mass revolt.

Failure to understand this can result in playing into De Valera's hands, can retard instead of assist the exposure of Fianna Fail in the eyes of the masses who have to be detached from its influence, and thus instead of making possible the speedy bursting of the shackles which De Valera is imposing on the fight, give the representatives of the Irish capitalists further opportunities for holding back the revolutionary struggle.

Unquestionably the fight for the smashing of the imperialist stranglehold necessitates the waging of a revolutionary class struggle against the entire Irish capitalist class, but one must know how, by what means and methods, the real character of Irish capitalism can be thoroughly unmasked, and that struggle correctly conducted.

A correct lead is given in this respect by the Minority resolution whose chief speakers dwelt on the points outlined above. As Peadar O'Donnell stated, they must avoid the mistake of misinterpreting the stage at which the struggle in Ireland now stood otherwise there would be failure to carry out the prerequisites which would enable the going forward to the victory of an Irish Workers' and Farmers' Republic.

Various speakers in support of the Minority viewpoint, including Sean Murray, George Gilmore, Frank Ryan and others outlined how without the leading of the drive to smash imperialism there could be no possibility of undermining the influence of De Valera and developing

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successful attack against Irish capitalism, and showed how so far as the question of bringing in the workers of the North was concerned, the Minority resolution alone specifically outline those basic demands which were essential to the masses of workers and poor farmers, demands affecting questions of wages, working hours, unemployment, housing, abolition of annuities payment, struggles of landless men, etc., upon which the revolutionary classes could be rallied in action.

When the vote was finally taken, the Minority resolution was declared adopted by 99 votes to 84. Shortly after this it was then intimated that the majority resolution on organisation advocating the formation of a new political party had been withdrawn.

The rejection of the line of the Majority resolution resulted in the leading supporters of the Majority Group, Michael Price, R. J. Connolly and Nora Connolly O'Brien declining to accept nomination at a later stage for the new Executive which the Congress elected.

It was also evident both from the character of a number of contributions made in the discussion and the large vote which the majority line received that many of the delegates still lack clarity on the importance of the task of building up the united front struggle around the fight for a united and independent Ireland, and how that fight requires to be carried through.

This is partly to be attributed to the fact that the Organising Bureau resolutions on the question were only brought to the delegates' attention almost on the eve of the Congress itself. It is obvious, however, that energetic steps should now be taken immediately in order to make thoroughly known the full meaning and significance of the decisions arrived at amongst the rank and file, and to develop a vigorous campaign throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, in the Free State and Northern Ireland alike, to have them translated into action without delay.

The situation is extremely favourable for winning the broad masses of workers and peasants to the support of the Republican Congress campaign against British imperialism and its allies in Ireland and for the basic demands of the toiling masses at whom the imperialist repressive measures and the policies of the Craigavon and De Valera Governments are striking heavily.

There is not a single factory, trade union organisation or rural area, but should be penetrated with the aim of rousing and winning over the broad masses for the fight along the lines which the Republic Congress has agreed upon, without loss of time.

If this is done quickly and decisively very big strides forward are certain to be made, and the revolutionary upsurge of the national independence movement will gather a mighty momentum for the snapping of the claims which have held down Ireland under the heel of the oppressor and exploiter for generations.

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Every strengthening of the revolutionary united mass fight for national emancipation and the needs of the toilers now, is at the same time preparing the way for the complete overthrow of capitalism in Ireland and bringing nearer the day when the victory of the Workers' and Farmers' Republic can be assured.

To lead, guide and direct the struggle successfully towards this end, however, a firm, strong and resolute class leadership in the form of a mass Communist Party is a vital necessity. Ireland already has its own Communist Party in being, but as yet it is far from being sufficiently strong and powerful for the great tasks which lie ahead.

It is necessary that the Communist Party of Ireland should be immediately strengthened. The stronger the Party becomes, the stronger will be the growth and mass activities of the united front movement, and the more rapidly will the way be opened for the complete national and social liberation of the Irish people.

And let the working class of Britain note ! As long as British Imperialism is able to exercise its ruthless reign of oppression on Ireland, the more will it be able to keep riveted the claims of wage slavery on the limbs of the British workers themselves. Therefore, in their own interests, the workers of Britain must do all in their power to assist the Irish masses in their struggle against the common enemy. In support of the demand of complete independence for Ireland, the struggle of the British working class must be intensified against its own capitalist class, and insistence made that not only shall the economic blockade be ended, but that all British forces be withdrawn from Ireland immediately.

" A blow delivered against the British imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland," Lenin once stated, " has a hundred times more political significance than a blow of equal weight would have in Asia and in Africa."

Let the working class of Britain do all it can to assist the masses in Ireland for the purpose of enabling that blow to be delivered.

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DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND COMMUNISM—A POSTCRIPT

[*The* LABOUR MONTHLY *has received the following reply from Edward Conze ("E.C.") to Rudas' article, published in September, criticising his review of "Dialectical Materialism and Communism" that was inserted in the "Plebs" magazine for June last; as he wishes to make certain points of personal explanation, we are printing it, although the greater part of it would not ordinarily justify the space taken, and is adequately treated by the short comment of Comrade Rudas at the end.*]

I. A Reply to Rudas

By EDWARD CONZE

1. SINCE Mr. Rudas, without any visible necessity, dragged me personally into the discussion, I must begin my reply with two personal remarks. All shorter reviews in "Plebs" are regularly signed only with the initials of the authors. Therefore I cannot be accused of "hiding behind the initials E.C.," especially since the full name frequently appeared in "Plebs" during the last months. Mr. Rudas further takes great delight in contemplating the complete ignorance of an author about whom he pretends to know nothing at all. I therefore must refer him to my German book on dialectical materialism ("Der Satz vom Widerspruch" 1932) from which he may see that however much I may, in his view, have misunderstood the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, I have thrown more than a casual glance at their writings. I am glad to see that my short review has induced Mr. Rudas to go considerably beyond his original article in the exposition of the exact nature of the difference between contradictions and antagonisms. He, incidentally, will find the same exposition in his copy of my German book. But Mr. Rudas and I profoundly disagree in the question of the "holy fathers" and of the inevitability of socialism.

2. The postscript of Mr. Rudas must be very convincing to everybody who does not compare my review which, by the way, recommended his pamphlet to the readers of "Plebs." From the context it is quite obvious that, when speaking of "sacred texts" of the "fathers of the church" I did not want to "discredit" the classics of Marxism but the attitude of the Russian communists towards them. In Russia, dialectical materialists have all facilities at their disposal; vast numbers of research workers, all economical facilities for research and protection from rival philosophical schools by the administrative measures of the police. Marx, Engels and Lenin have laid the basis of dialectical materialism. Nobody can doubt, however, that their remarks are essentially

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fragmentary and would deserve a great deal of further development. Neither Marx nor Lenin could, for lack of time, finish the work on dialectics which they planned. The big resources of Russia enable a group of people to make Marxist philosophy a full time job. Do we now see that Russian philosophers are driving the analysis of the world of nature and society beyond the limits which Marx, Engels and Lenin could reach? We see nothing of the kind. It is good to learn from the classics. Nobody criticised, however, more than Lenin those who cling to the classics and dare not go beyond them. All Russian publications on dialectics consist—with very few exceptions[1]—of long strings of quotations, adorned by a repetition of the quotation in other words and by long passages of more or less "witty" polemics. It is a quite gratuitous slander to say that "Plebs" and I regard only Kautsky, Adler and de Man, regard only deviations from marxism and extirpations of its revolutionary content as developments of marxism. We do not object to the development until Lenin but to the lack of further development of dialectical materialism in Russia after Lenin. What I am concerned with is the sterility of philosophical research in the Soviet Union. Or is Mr. Rudas able to refer to any work of outstanding quality done in this field? It must have been kept a dead secret until now. In spite of their great facilities the Russian theoreticians have failed to develop the fundamental but fragmentary remarks of the classics by a systematic and elastic analysis of the things and facts themselves. They have failed to penetrate the vast field of physical and biological science with the dialectical method. They have failed to make use of the dialectical method for the new phenomenon of fascism. Classics are petrified into "sacred texts" if they hamper further research. If Mr. Rudas demands self-criticism he might begin to think about the causes of the unsatisfactory state of dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union which is, visible for everybody, reflected in the insecurity of Western socialists in the question of dialectics.

3. We now come to the question of the inevitability of socialism. We can leave aside the problem whether in Rudas' original article the necessity of socialism appeared as a mystical necessity, since Rudas has gone considerably beyond his former exposition.

I do not see why the possibility of decay cannot be as real as that of further development of society. "Human society is still evolving, it is not yet in retrogression," says Rudas in his pamphlet (p. 11). I do not know where he gets that from. I also do not see why certain societies may not go back, while others advance.

Apart from that, I am not so sure that the development towards "barbarism" means necessarily an immediate "return to small scale production." I see no reason why the outcome of capitalism should not be a semi-feudal serf-state in which some few people collectively own the means of production, keeping the working population in the state of "serfs" who are well fed but who are denied any rights and any dignity. The absence of competition would avoid capitalistic crises. The absence of competition together with a lack of pressure from the masses would be detrimental to technical progress. Society would stagnate and very gradually decay. In the long run this might lead again to small scale production but I see no necessity that it should.

At any rate, the decay to small scale production will be very gradual. We have had historical precedents for a decay of this kind. Cicero could as little

[1] I only know of two exception, namely of two articles of Mr. Rudas in "Unter dem Banner des Marxismus".

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imagine the disappearance of millions of slaves, as Mr. Rudas can that of millions of proletarians. The process can be very slow. It may operate not only through the drastic methods of modern warfare, with its possibilities of spreading epidemics, but also through the gradual lowering of the birth rate.

Apart from that, the disappearance of the proletariat as a class seems possible. Mr. Rudas says that the proletariat must resist this development by its very existence. It must resist its annihilation but this does not prove the resistance to be necessarily successful. The resistance can lead to mere revolts followed by passive submission. The revolutionary energy of the proletariat can be dissipated by bad leadership, as it was in Germany through the long series of ill-prepared actions of the C.P. Death or victory is the choice before the proletariat. It will die if it does not find the intelligent leadership which for years prepares for the decisive moment and then seizes it. Mr. Rudas will object that the proletariat has got this intelligent leadership. The C.P. is the " only leader to victory." This statement is in curious conflict with the facts. The C.P. has been able to crush the rotten Tsarist system. It has been defeated wherever it has fought against the iron machine of a developed capitalist state which is organising itself in fascism. The C.P. has been as helpless in the new era of fascism as were the reformists in the new era of imperialism. If we do not push forward our practical and theoretical work to meet the demands of the new situation we may miss through bad and complacent leadership the chance which a temporary break-down of capitalism may give us to introduce socialism.

Neither can I regard the existence of the Soviet Union as a proof of the necessity of socialism. Socialism is not inevitable even there. As things are now, the result may as well be the establishment of a bureaucratic state capitalism as that of socialism. The sources of power, the means of production, are directly in the hands of the bureaucracy and only indirectly in the hands of the proletariat. Now, the bureaucracy is relatively independent from the proletariat through the successive abolition of democracy in the country, in the proletariat and in the Communist Party. The main counterweight against the admitted existence of a bureaucracy is the education of the proletariat. It is therefore, that I urged Mr. Rudas to make dialectics a living thing again because we need it so much in the Soviet Union in the fight against bureaucracy and in the capitalist countries in the fight against fascism.

II. Conze Answered

By L. RUDAS

OMITTING the personal remarks of Mr. Conze as having only a moderate interest for the readers of the LABOUR MONTHLY I regret to say that I am equally unable to enter into a scientific discussion with him on the other questions which divide us.

I cannot argue scientifically with a person who, after all that has happened in Germany in the post-war period, is able to accuse the Communist Party of Germany of " bad leadership " that " dissipated the revolutionary energy of the proletariat " and presents this *deliberate distortion of the facts* as a " proof " that the Communist Party is incapable of leading the proletariat to victory. Surely, if Mr. Conze prefers to be silent on the rôle which *his own party*, the German Social Democratic Party played in Germany, he can easily " prove "

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anything he wants against the Communists ? But the facts remain facts, even if you prefer not to mention them ! And the fact is that even amongst *bourgeois* writers there is a *unanimous opinion* on the causes which instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat led to the rule of Fascism in Germany (see, for instance, the American *bourgeois* journalist Mowrer, and many others). It is unanimously admitted that it was *the policy of the German Social Democratic Party*. Who if not Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann strangled the revolution of 1918 and restored the power to the German capitalist class lost in the world war ? Who if not these same social democratic leaders tolerated and partly even *organised* the counter-revolution in Germany by using the Orgesch, the Reinhardt-division, etc., " against Bolshevism for Democracy " ? Who was in the Government when the Black Reichswehr and the Stahlhelm was organised exclusively with the aim to " dissipate " the revolutionary energy of the proletariat ? Was it Severing and Hoersing or the Communist Party who defeated the proletarian revolution and saved the capitalist class in 1921 and 1923 ? What " dissipated " more the " revolutionary energy of the proletariat " ; was it the alleged " bad leadership " of the Communist Party of Germany or the infamous terror organised and carried out with the help of *aristocrat-officers* by the same Hoersing and Severing in Saxony, on the Ruhr, and by Zoergibel in Berlin ? What about the capitalist policy of Mueller, Braun, Hilferding ? What about the " toleration " of Bruening, Papen, *even of Hitler* to whom Stampfer, the editor of the Vorwaerts, offered a " loyal opposition " after the " democratic " elections in which Hitler " won a majority " ?

While it is generally admitted that it was the *betrayal* of the German Social Democratic Party which *prepared the way to Fascism* by tolerating and even organising counter-revolutionary movements in post-war Germany, by letting go unpunished the murders committed by the counter-revolutionary bands (remember Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Jogiches !), but severely reprimanding at the same time every revolutionary action of the proletariat, Mr. Conze easily " proves " the contrary by a very *simple method :*—by omitting to allude to these facts contradicting his *exclusive aim of discrediting the Communists in general and the German Communist Party in particular*. This manner of proceeding is very simple ; it is also quite *disreputable :* it is the well-known weapon of all enemies of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. It is sufficient to point this out to convince every reader that against such a manner of proceeding there is no necessity to *argue*. It exposes itself sufficiently as a weapon against the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat.

The same applies in connection with the *reactionary utopia* put forward by Mr. Conze as an " argument " against the inevitability of Socialism. There is no necessity to *argue* with somebody who speaks seriously of a *class society* where the workers will be " serfs," but—" well fed " ! As if it were not the *essence* of all class society that the workers are *exploited*, that is, held in poverty and misery for the profit of their rulers ! As if the accumulation of wealth in a class society would be possible without the *accumulation of poverty* on the side of the toiling masses !

Consequently, I must renounce the pleasure of entering into a discussion with Mr. Conze on philosophical questions, or on the scientific work going on in the Soviet Union, or on anything else whatever. I will confine myself to the statement that Mr. Conze confirms in his present reply what I said in my postscript : his review of my pamphlet was, (and his present reply is,) nothing else but an attempt to counteract the revolutionary effect my pamphlet may have had on the proletarian reader. I was, (and am now,) wholly justified in protesting against this attempt.

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BOOK REVIEWS

POLITICS OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

The First Workers' Government. By G. R. Mitchison, with an Introduction by Sir Stafford Cripps. (Gollancz. 5s.)

A Guide to Modern Politics. By G. D. H. Cole and M. I. Cole. (Gollancz. 6s.)

THESE two works on political questions by leading representatives of the Socialist League (as well as the symposium "Problems of the Socialist Transition," reviewed in last month's issue) appeared on the eve of the Southport Labour Conference. Although differing in aim and character, both throw light on the outlook of those associated with the Socialist League.

G. R. Mitchison's "The First Workers' Government" has been widely reviewed in the press. It is a political tract in the form of an imaginary history,[1] relating how a Labour Government, elected with a majority in 1936, successfully carries through, according to Socialist League principles, a constitutional transformation to Socialism within a few years. The book is published with warm endorsements by Lansbury, Webb, Cripps, Trevelyan and Cole, and might thus be mistaken by many readers as an indication of the policy of a future Labour Government. Unfortunately for any such claim to political realism, the Southport Labour Party Conference, immediately after its issue, proceeded to reject by overwhelming majorities all the proposals of the Socialist League ; and the author, G. R. Mitchison, found himself moving at Southport proposals that were an integral part of his book (limitation of the compensation for capitalists to terminable annuities) and being defeated by 2,118,000 to 149,000 votes.

We have here, in short, a socialist lawyer's "utopia," completely removed from political realities, innocent of all understanding of class forces, and envisaging Socialism as a constitutional-administrative problem. It is only necessary to contrast such a work as William Morris' "News From Nowhere" to see how far more realist and up-to-date and practical is the latter.[2] The aim of the book is to be above all "practical" : as the introductory note declares, "its characteristic feature is the scrupulous avoidance of anything in the nature of pious aspirations or vague phrases ; detail after detail is given—indeed, the Appendix contains several draft Acts of Parliament." But this is precisely where it fails. The only *practical* approach is the *revolutionary* approach, which faces the issues of the class struggle ; all else deals with a world of puppets and paper, which will crumble at the first touch of reality. Socialism

[1]The story form gives the opportunity for some amusing personal touches. Thus we learn that a brilliant university teacher called "Colet," surrounded by his "young men," through his educational and propagandist activities within the Labour Party completely transforms the character of the Labour Party and sets his stamp upon it. "Colet was loyal enough to his colleagues, but some comparison was inevitable between his activities and the deficiencies of the past." The book is highly commended by G. D. H. Cole on the wrapper.

[2]It is a pleasure to note that R. Page Arnot's "William Morris : A Vindication," based on and amplifying his well-known article in the March LABOUR MONTHLY, has now been issued (Lawrence : 6d.) and should help to bring many readers to a better appreciation of Morris' revolutionary writings, from which English Socialists can still learn.

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is supposed to be introduced *without the opposition of the bourgeoisie* ; the asses propose to divide the lion's skin with the most exemplary attention to the details of the texts of the agreements for the division, but omitting the detail of the killing of the lion.

> It was being brought home to the capitalist classes in the country that what they were in for was a change of a different character to any to which they had previously been accustomed. . . . *In face of a change of that kind, political opposition began to seem somewhat futile.* (p. 68).

The " futility," we fear, lies elsewhere. And again

> Within a short time the opposition got " out of breath." p. 156).
> *Organised political opposition lapsed into the temporary silence of bewilderment.* (p. 157).

Well, well, well.

The picture of the transformation of the Labour Party is equally remote from realities. In 1935 a group of central officials (" including Colet,") proceed to transform the Labour Party into a left socialist body after the heart of the Socialist League. The " older leaders " conveniently die off through illness—a most admirable peaceful, constitutional method of solving the problem (we would not accuse the author of suggesting poisoning as a political method ; the reformist leaders just happen to die off simultaneously ; history is like that). On the question of the Labour Party, however, the experience of Southport may have begun to bring the author closer to a sense of political realities.

The book is likely to be remembered historically for one magnificent sentence :

> As for Sir Oswald Mosley and his followers, I have not even mentioned them. (p. 16).

This is the only reference in the book to Fascism.

The " Guide to Modern Politics " of G. D. H. and M. I. Cole is politically less important, since it makes no attempt to present a worked-out political outlook, but endeavours to remain nominally " above the battle." This is fatal to its value as an introduction to political questions ; since the essence of politics is struggle, and the spectator can see none of the game. The basic fallacy of the book is the attempt to be *nominally non-partisan*, and yet to outstep the limits of a reference book of facts and enter into the realm of political and theoretical discussion. In consequence, it falls hopelessly between two stools. It is neither a compact reference book of facts (despite skill in constitutional descriptions and accuracy in superficial details), because the facts are mixed up with rambling and highly doubtful interpretations and opinions. Nor is it a systematic statement of a considered political theory, the whole approach to political questions being extremely superficial.

The super-class super-political approach to politics is of course an imaginary abstraction. In reality the outlook expressed is that of the enlightened Western European bourgeois intelligentsia. The problem of " Parliamentarism " appears as the centre of the picture. " The challenge to Parliamentarism " (i.e. by Fascism and Communism), the doubtful possibilities of a " favourable outlook for Parliamentarism " (p. 46), the " tragic history of Parliamentarism in post-war Europe " (p. 59), etc., etc.—such is the central theme. The Liberal-Labour method of the parallel treatment of Fascism and Communism as alternatives to the abstraction called " Parliamentarism " (in place of treating the issue of the working class and the bourgeoisie as the basic political issue

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of the present period) reaches comic results. Thus we learn of the post-war period :

> The threat of world Socialist revolution had been successfully beaten off for the time ; and Russia had been isolated from the West, though not subdued. But just as the older statesmen were breathing a sigh of relief at having come so well out of an exceedingly ticklish situation, the united front of European Parliamentarism was abruptly broken in a quite unexpected place by the Revolution (sic) in Italy. (p. 36).

Did Churchill, Poincaré and Co., after " breathing a sigh of relief " at the successful preventing of the expansion of the world socialist revolution beyond Russia, suddenly feel that their " united front " had been broken and their whole work had to begin anew because of the advent of Mussolini in Italy ? Does this bear any relation to realities ? Is it not obvious that Churchill and Mussolini feel themselves and express themselves (see Churchill on Mussolini) as allies in a common fight, using only different tactical methods, against a common enemy ? Is it not obvious that the post-war bourgeoisie has used alternatively, and with the quickest interchanges, parliamentarism, White Terror and Fascism as alternative tactical methods for defeating the socialist revolution, and that this is the key to post-war politics ? Yet this *completely false, completely liberal non-socialist approach* underlies the whole book. Typical is the curious statement on page 44 that in the post-war period " Force comes back into the political field."

The authors endeavour to be " fair " to everybody. They see good and bad points in Communism, and good and bad points in Fascism. Lenin and Mussolini are both " men of ideas " (" Mussolini is far more than Hitler, and not much less than Kemal or Lenin, a man of ideas," p. 355). The " Causes of Fascism " are a " state of mind," " forces in men's minds " (p. 61). It is remarkable how many good points these fair-minded authors succeed in finding in Fascism. Thus they write of Italy :

> Fascism . . . has made a very great and in some respects successful effort to improve public health and the housing condition of the workers, and has given also to some of them (!) unemployment benefit, and to more comparative security in their jobs, and various provisions for education and amusement which are considerably in advance of what has been done in parliamentary countries. The effects of collective contracts have been to steady and to a certain extent to level up the rates of the worst-paid Italian workers. All this has meant a good deal to the Italian worker, even if the unemployment pay is very tiny, and Mussolini's public works programme and the existence of bodies like the Fascist militia have meant that in practice some of the unemployment consequent upon the slump has been mitigated. (p. 181).

Who would guess from this charming picture that the maximum unemployment benefit is $3\frac{3}{4}$ lire (11d.) a day for three months ; that of 982,321 unemployed in December, 1931, only 195,454 were receiving any benefit at all ; that there were 1,018,000 unemployed in the beginning of 1934 ; or that the social service expenditure is among the lowest of any leading country in Europe (3 per cent. of the total national budget, as against 9 per cent. in Britain) ? The effects of the crisis in lowering standards are no less sympathetically treated :

> But no State that is not wholly self-contained can save its workers from the effects of general economic conditions. Italy has felt the slump badly, and the great efforts to balance trade returns have naturally tended to reduce the standards of life. (p. 181).

" Naturally." The cause of the crisis is not seen as lying in capitalism, therefore in Fascism ; it is " the slump," it is " general economic conditions," it is because Italy is " not wholly self-contained " ; therefore " naturally "

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the workers have to make sacrifices. This is the writing of professed "socialist" authors.

On Imperialism, which is always the hidden premiss, the undefined basis of the type of outlook expressed in this book, there are some illuminating lights. Thus "The Political System of Great Britain" is solemnly described in constitutional detail for 22 pages; at the end the authors suddenly remember "the Empire," add a hasty note that it "should not be forgotten" (!), and give it three quarters of a page:

> This brief sketch of necessity has taken no account of the British Empire. . . . It should not, however, be forgotten that the British political system does not live to itself alone. (p. 109).

This book is not consciously or deliberately reactionary. It is well-intentioned in a heavy liberal fashion. It may conceivably induce some general readers to take a more moderate, sympathetic outlook to the Soviet Union, if equally to Fascism. But no Marxist can recommend it as "a guide to modern politics."

R.P.D.

HOW NOT TO FIGHT WAR.

Why War? By Ellen Wilkinson and Edward Conze (National Council of Labour Colleges Publishing Society. 1s.)

Merchants of Death. By H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen. (Routledge. 7s. 6d.)

IN several countries movements against war and Fascism already unite almost all the organisations created by the working class. In Britain this movement is developing fast. These two publications raise important issues for this movement.

The pamphlet "Why War?" has been written by Ellen Wilkinson in collaboration with a former member of the German Social Democratic Party, and is issued by the National Council of Labour Colleges. The rôle which Ellen Wilkinson has fulfilled in association with the British Anti-War Movement, as well as the fact that the pamphlet is issued by the Labour College organisation, makes it important that the line it expresses should receive careful political attention. The pamphlet claims to be "Marxist." It is necessary to state frankly, however, that the theoretical line expressed corresponds far more to the exploded Kautskyan theories, and the practical line has nothing in common with revolutionary Marxism. The consequently dangerous character of the pamphlet is shown most clearly and typically in its main conclusion:

> Actually, in cold fact, all that probably remains for socialists and communists to discuss is how to make the best use of the war situation when it comes, in order to destroy capitalism. (p. 54).

This counsel of despair and defeat, of neglect of present action with a promise of resistance to capitalism at some future time, is the opposite of Marxism.

Take, first, the causes of modern war, summarised in the second chapter of "Why War?" capitalists want cheap raw materials, a market "for their own products . . . then they want a market that can absorb their spare money and pay a high interest for it" (p. 15). Those who remember the stress laid by Lenin in "Imperialism" on the export of capital as the "typical feature of imperialism," as the main explanation, for instance, of the "aggressive

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imperialism" of Britain (chapter 8) will be surprised to find this export of capital appears in the shape of mere "spare money," less important than raw materials and commodity-markets. But those who also remember the chapter in Lenin's book which deals with Kautsky's views on imperialism will not be quite so surprised. The pamphlet in its definition of the cause of war is Kautsky, German centrist Social-democracy, come again—I will not say to life—to the surface.

For the full meaning of this, the result of taking Kautsky as guide to the causes of war, it is impossible here to do anything except refer the reader to chapter 7 of "Imperialism," in which Lenin summarises:

> Kautsky's definition is not only false and foreign to Marxism. It serves as a basis for a whole system which breaks away all along the line from Marxian theory and practice . . . Kautsky detaches the policy of imperialism from its economics . . . (so that) monopolies in economics are compatible with methods which are neither monopolistic nor violent nor annexationist in politics . . . The result is bourgeois reformism instead of Marxism.

This leads us directly to one of the main propositions in "Why War?"—*that British imperialism is not at the moment imperialist!* The authors write:

> To-day, Britain is overwhelmingly opposed to a new war. She is sated with colonies and disturbed at the effect the war has had on her highly artificial economic system. (p. 5).
>
> The difference between the "peace group" of nations and the "war group" is the difference between satisfied and unsatisfied countries. France and Britain are well provided with colonies . . . Britain is in a state of economic decline . . . So naturally, therefore, Britain is more honestly in favour of disarmament than other countries. (p. 36).

To translate into Lenin's terms: British monopoly finance-capital is "neither violent nor annexationist in politics."—A conclusion not only "false and foreign to Marxism" but contradicted by any day's issue of any newspaper, by life from Manchester to Manchukuo and from aeronautics to Zionism. "Our frontier on the Rhine," 41 new R.A.F. squadrons, support for Japan, support for Hitler (most reluctantly qualified), police support for Mosley, sedition bills and concentration camps—these show not satiety but an appetite increased, as is normal in capitalist society, by indigestion.

A group of imperialist powers does exist—and British imperialism is temporarily, reluctantly, and to a limited extent part of this group—that desires to postpone the next world war to a more convenient moment; but this group is not "sated" or "more honestly in favour of disarmament." It is manœuvring with peace as capitalists sometimes manœuvre with reform. These manœuvres are real; they can be and are being used to advantage by the only power really working for peace. But these powers remain imperialist, and Britain in particular (while for camouflage British Imperialism must join in the policy of "welcoming" the Soviet Union to the League of Nations) remains aggressively imperialist, openly or covertly supporting the powers that are driving more directly for war. To picture Britain as one of a "peace group" of nations is to hamper and mislead the British Anti-War movement.

The *paralysing pessimism* of "Why War?" also derives, clearly, from the same source as this "peaceful Britain" Baldwin-patter. The source is German Social-Democracy; the debris of this broken and ruined party can see no hope anywhere. A General Strike against war? "But suppose the enemy . . . . has taken the precaution of going Fascist" (p. 48). (This argument we understand—when it comes from Bromley, Citrine and Bevin.) Revolution? "Without . . . conditions which can be found only after a devastating

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war, there is no reasonable hope for the victory of a workers' revolution" (p. 14). "The blunt fact is that the communist parties have lost each one of their struggles with the new force—fascism" (p. 41). In other words war and Fascism are inevitable: but after a "devastating war" there may be some hope. "There is not one method that can be relied on with any confidence . . . Is it a counsel of despair to say 'As we cannot prevent the next war, let us determine to use it'" (pp. 54-55). We answer: yes, it is counsel of despair; it is also counsel of Wels, Kautsky, Otto Bauer—the men who made possible Hitler's concentration camps and Goering's new air force. This was their method: "we can do nothing now, we will do everything later on." It is a method of retreat that can only help the "merchants of death."

As against this pessimism stands the fact that the working class movement throughout the world has learnt something from the German events, is moving towards united action against Fascism and war. (The N.C.L.C. is surely unique in thinking that the things to be learnt from Germany are the Social-Democratic views on philosophy and politics.) For this movement against war the American "best-seller," *Merchants of Death*, provides a store of useful examples of the callous swindling by which the armament industry lives, its enormous profits, its connection with governments. Such examples can often start workers thinking when capitalist conditions have made them impervious to other arguments. The authors point to the arms industry as one "to which our present civilisation clings and for which it is responsible" and that it is useless to "denounce the arms industry and accept the present state of civilisation which fosters it." The weakness of the book is the futility of the suggestions in the last chapter as to "what can be done about it." But at least the authors, being petty-bourgeois "radicals" and not German Social-Democrats, do feel that *something* ought to be done.

T.H.W.

A PARTIAL EXPOSURE OF IDEALISM.

The Outlook of Science. R. L. Worrall, M.B., Ch.M. (John Bale, Sons, Danielsson, 1933, pp. 203, price 8s. 6d.).

THIS book deals with the tendencies to-day in British scientific thought towards the standpoint of idealism and the negation of materialism—the basis of all science. While it exposes clearly the idealist tendency of a number of scientists, it does not adequately explain this tendency as a result of the class-struggle. Instead of showing how and why bourgeois scientists as a whole must tend towards idealism to-day, and how this is linked up with open reaction in politics, the book is more concerned with showing the inconsistency of idealism from a purely scientific and academic point of view. Thus, while there is much that is useful in the book to all who are interested in the class basis of science, the reader is bound to feel that the author is very definitely an intellectual who himself does not fully grasp the significance of the class struggle as the basis of the tendencies which he describes.

A popular book of this kind should do two things: (1) prove that the idealistic tendency does exist in science to-day and that this tendency is itself a negation of science, and (2) explain the rôle of idealism as a reactionary force.

The fact that the scientist must be a materialist is based on the fact that every scientist must, in practice, accept the existence of an external world. To doubt the existence of an external world, which is the idealist position, is

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to deny the whole basis of science. Hence, when scientists start to question the reality of the external world, they are in fact completely denying their own right to existence as scientists. The existence of an external world is proved by the fact that long before men were ever formulating this question : " Does the external world really exist ? " they were living, and in practice were changing the external world. This practice is the proof of the external world and no further proof is necessary or important. The scientist who denies the external world is denying the very possibility of scientific research, whereas the Agnostic, who merely " doubts," is simply " shamefacedly " hiding his materialism as a concession to the bourgeois society in which he lives. These basic ideas are dealt with quite adequately by Mr. Worrall by quotation from Engels and Lenin.

Mr. Worrall now turns to the modern scientists who have gone over to a negation of science. Bertrand Russell comes early on the scene.

> It will be seen that the objective—the physical reality presented to our senses—becomes in Berkeley's philosophy identical with the subjective—with the similar perceptions of a number of people. This same opinion is found in the writings of modern subjective idealists. For example, we read in Bertrand Russell's "Analysis of Matter" : " I mean here by ' objectivity ' not anything metaphysical, but merely ' *agreeing with the testimony of others.*' " Russell, like many other idealists calls it " metaphysical " to say that objects exist apart from human perceptions. By " objective " he does not mean this, but merely " agreeing with the testimony of others." It is then only possible to explain this " agreement " by divine direction from some supernatural agency. However, Russell, unlike Berkeley, leaves unexplained how the testimony of individual perceptions can agree without a corresponding independent physical reality. (p. 8).

Later on we find that Professor Hogben is in almost precisely the same position as Bertrand Russell :—

> Professor Hogben introduces an idealist conception of knowledge, namely that the test of its validity is whether the majority accept it. He says : " The mechanist is concerned with how to proceed to a construction which will represent as much about the universe as human beings with their limited range of receptor organs can agree to accept." . . . Hogben here substitutes for the approach to objective reality the subjective agreement of different human beings on what they will " accept." . . . Professor Hogben appears to have forgotten for the moment that scientific as well as all other beliefs are obtained through sensations. If objective reality is dismissed, then only the subjective—sensations, ideas—remain. (pp. 134-5).

Besides Russell and Hogben, Mr. Worrall also deals with Professors Eddington, J. S. Haldane, and A. N. Whitehead. Eddington's idealism centres round an " external world which is of inscrutable nature " and " a set of pointer readings " (p. 52), or to quote a more frankly idealist formulation " the stuff of the world is mind stuff . . ." So here, indeed, we are again back to the classical leader of idealism, Bishop Berkeley.

We next come to the " Abstractions " of Professor Whitehead, whose method is a highly complicated juggling with words, reducing objective reality to such things as " organisms," " events," " aspects " and " prehensions," the use of which words enables Professor Whitehead to christen himself a " provisional realist." But " what Whitehead says is that the realisation of natural entities, *i.e.*, nature, is the realisation of a ' prehension,' that is, of something mental in character." (p. 79). From this stage to a paradoxical formulation of a religious standpoint is not a difficult step and Professor Whitehead takes it.

It is in collecting these quotations, showing how the most prominent exponents of bourgeois science to-day are throwing over their science and openly embracing mysticism that Mr. Worrall has done useful work. Naturally, the quotations given here are but a small sample of the total. It is in this section, in exposing the inconsistencies of the bourgeois scientists from a purely scientific

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point of view, that Mr. Worrall's book is at its best. We must now turn to the second aspect of the book, namely the explanation of this phenomenon in terms of the class struggle.

At the beginning of the book Mr. Worrall remarks: "The more highly placed the scientist, the more apt is he (with notable exceptions) to embrace idealism, theology, mysticism, and the supernatural. This applies particularly to England, and there are, of course, sociological reasons for it." (p. 14). Here it was above all essential to point out, but Mr. Worrall does not do so, that this happens because the ruling class places in the most prominent positions those scientists who adopt the idealist and unscientific point of view in their public philosophical pronouncements. Just one concrete example of this is the Gifford Fund, which is an endowment for scientists who will lecture on "Science and Religion," and whose lectures are usually published afterwards together with tremendous publicity throughout the capitalist press. It is these same "Gifford Fund" lecturers who are particularly prominent in the "scientific" broadcasts by the B.B.C.

Mr. Worrall's sociological analysis amounts to stating two facts. First, that idealism is the backbone of religion, and that religion is the backbone of capitalist society. The first point is illustrated by a very apt quotation from Bishop Berkeley, the classical exponent of philosophical idealism: "How great a friend *material substance* has been to atheists in all ages were needless to relate. All their monstrous systems have so visible and necessary dependence on it that, when the corner-stone is once removed, the whole fabric cannot choose but fall to the ground, insomuch as it is no longer worth while to bestow a particular consideration on the absurdities of every wretched sect of atheists." And he continues, demonstrating the political significance of this, as follows:— "if the arguments we have produced against it (Matter) are not found equal to demonstration (as to me they evidently seem) yet I am sure all friends to knowledge, peace, and religion have reason to wish they were." (p. 15). But Bishop Berkeley is excelled by Professor J. S. Haldane in lucidly expressing the relationship between religion and "political stability," *i.e.*, the stability of the existing social system. According to Haldane:

> "In actual fact religion must sooner or later appear to us as nothing but an illusion and a mockery if once we take the initial step . . . that the visible world around us is in reality a physical world . . ." (p. 119). And he goes on: "When the illusion of religious belief finally died out, we should apparently be faced by a state of society in which honesty, diligence, charity and patriotism would have to be enforced by the feeble weapons of compulsion or individual self-interest. *Such a society would be wholly unstable* and would go down at the first encounter with an intelligent society inspired by religious beliefs." (p. 121).

True for capitalist society perhaps, but not for a society in which the exploiters are overthrown. Proof: It was the U.S.S.R. that came victorious out of the imperialist intervention, not the imperialists, however much their "crusade" was "inspired by religious beliefs." Such a concrete example as this, taken from the class struggle, is *not* given by Worrall. But such examples should have been an essential of such a book.

The social significance of the tendency of present-day bourgeois scientists towards idealism and the negation therefore of materialism, the very foundation of science, is not simply a matter of an obvious connection between idealism—religion—and the stability of the existing social system. Beneath this there is something far more fundamental. This is the fact that a class that has passed its zenith, and is approaching its complete overthrow by a new class which is advancing to power, has no place for science in its system. In the economic

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sphere this fact shows itself in a number of ways: Science can no longer be fully utilised in increasing production, because the contradictions of the existing state of society have caused the problem of "over-production," and hence we find science being directly suppressed on the one hand (the suppression of inventions, economy on scientific research and education in general, etc.), or used for purely destructive purposes on the other (means of destroying coffee by burning it in railway locomotives, capitalist "plans" for cutting down production and getting rid of "surplus" stocks, and finally, the gradual concentration of science on preparing for another great orgy of destruction, a new war). In the social and philosophic sphere, the contradictions within the capitalist system have become so great that the ruling class can no longer look at things scientifically, for a scientific approach can only lead to the conclusions of Marxism-Leninism, namely, to revolutionary socialism. Since such conclusions are impossible to the capitalist class—which is fighting for its own survival and therefore cannot recognise its own doom—in the social and philosophical sphere the capitalist class is forced to deny science just as it denies constructive scientific work in the sphere of economic activity. Finally, in the sphere of the "pure" sciences themselves questions have arisen which cannot be answered except by a scientific method that pays due attention to the rôle of movement in material phenomena, their development, and their transformations from quantity to quality and vice versa. This scientific approach belongs essentially to Marxism-Leninism, since it is the scientific approach of those who are *changing* the world, as opposed to the mechanical and analytical approach of those who take the existing order as unchangeable.

One more point must be mentioned before closing. Mr. Worrall links idealism with religion and religion with reaction. He completely ignores, however, the link represented by such reformists as Bertrand Russell, namely, idealism and reformism. Reformism is reaction in a disguised form. The idealism of Bertrand Russell is definitely a disguised form of religion. For, just as the reformists strongly criticise the evils of capitalism, but do not expose the roots of these evils, thus playing the actual rôle of defenders of these evils, so, Bertrand Russell is anti-religious and has exposed many of the evils of religion. However, not having exposed the roots of these evils, he in fact still defends idealism and allies himself therefore with the forces of religion. Bertrand Russell's idealism is the natural accompaniment of his reformism. If Mind is primary, then social change lies primarily in the changing of the human mind, and *not* in the transformation of society. Thus, there is a direct link between the idealism (which is "anti-religious") of Russell, and the Socialism (which "attacks" capitalism) of the reformists. In both cases the acceptance of bourgeois ideology as opposed to the science of Marxism-Leninism makes the reformist-idealists part of the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Mr. Worrall's rather dogmatic statement of the relationship between idealism-religion-reaction completely fails to explain this anti-religious position held by Bertrand Russell.

P.A.S.

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